



in the child

Fashionable Involvements.

CHAP. I.

SHORT ADIEUS.

“WILL you ever have done with your compliments and excuses?” asked the Baronet, looking at his wife, (not as he would have done at Mrs. Snug)—“Don’t you know child, that by your nonsense and his own politeness, Mr. Curry is all this time detained from sending the bailiffs out of the house?”

“I desire, Sir Frederick,” said her ladyship, returning his glance with cent. per cent. interest, “that you will not interrupt our conversation,” though the conversation was

all of her own manufacturing, "at least give me leave to discharge *some* of our obligations to Mr. Curry, by presenting him with a card for my ball this evening."

"Spare yourself that trouble," hastily replied the gentleman for whom her favour was intended, "*my* dancing days are over! Permit me to take my leave - it is necessary that I should dismiss some of your company, to make room for other guests of more respectable figure, whose occupations, though diametrically opposite, end in the same prospective. Whilst I, at a distance, can only have the honour to partake of your festive enjoyment by tantalizing suppositions, may *you* and *yours* reap the full harvest of *all* those joys, which are the peculiar growth of high heads, light hearts, and light heels!"

Lady Isleworth would have stopped him, if it had been in her power, but he was gone; and she cried out, imagining herself to have been heard by Sir Frederick, who had also vanished—"What a boor he is!—I only wanted him to stay just whilst I desired he would not send away the two tall fellows; and he, before I can speak, off he flies! I wish, Sir Frederick, you would pull the bell, and order that they may be detained to wait this evening—

FASHIONABLE INVOLVEMENTS.

ing—they are absolute grenadiers, and would do us vast credit !”

No answer, not so much as a damn issuing in responsive accordance to her plaintive notes, she suddenly turned from the mirror, on which she had rivetted her attention, and looking round the room, saw it totally evacuated. “ Well !” added she, speaking to her shadow in the glass, “ one might, with as much convenience to one’s self, be maid or widow, as wife to a man who is never by when one wants to make him issue one’s orders ! Then, without once thinking where Clarissa might *then* be, whether come home, or whether still abroad, she turned her whole thoughts on what ornaments she could spare from her false jewels, to deck the hair and bosom of Lord Clarence’s countess elect ; and, with the view of arranging them, passed directly to her own apartment.

Meantime the merchant having settled, as far as came under his present cognizance, the affairs of this dreadfully deranged colony of idiots, returned to the city, and at six o’clock, stepping into his post-chaise, was on the road to Enfield Chace, whilst the rescued moveables of Sir Frederick were, by their different keepers, restored to their respective stations, from whence

they had so rudely been dragged by the merciless hands of justice. And now, every thing and every body being in their appropriated places, matters went on swimmingly at the mansion of luxury; the master of which being retired to his closet, found his happiness in having, as he imagined, over-reached the merchant, increased to ecstasy, in reading the following elegant lines, addressed to him by the idol of his idolatry.

“ I do not know what effect the reports of an
 “ illiberal, ill-natured, censorious world may
 “ have produced on your friendship, but the
 “ confidence of my husband, I assure you, is
 “ quite unshaken. I returned home last night.
 “ He knows I have been no farther than Wind-
 “ sor, to visit a particular friend, to whom Lord
 “ Daffodowndilly was so obliging to convey
 “ me in his own curricule. It is mighty laugh-
 “ able all this fuss should be made about a little
 “ trip to the country! Captain Snug says the
 “ whole town rings of my adventure! He wishes
 “ to shake you by the hand—come to us the
 “ moment you are at leisure! I hear Lady
 “ Isleworth is to be at home this evening to all
 “ the gay world.—I should like vastly to be one
 “ of the party, and a very short notice would
 “ suffice to make my toilet. Let me hear from,
 “ if I cannot see you, and do not fluff your
 “ head

“ head with crotchets adverse to my virtue, or
 “ the honour of my Lord Daffodowndilly.”

When the family assembled at dinner, and not before, Lady Isleworth began to make enquiries after Clarissa; and, as at some time or other the secret must come out, Sir Frederick was obliged to confess, that he had given permission for her making a visit to Mr. Curry's sister, with which lady she had gone a few hours before into the country.

Whilst labouring to vindicate the step he had taken, a terrible storm gathered on the countenance of the exasperated Lady Isleworth, whose anger, since Mrs. Snug had confided to him her inclination to grace the ball with her presence, was extremely awful and extremely critical! Spite of the most slavish concessions that abject purposes could excite, or haughty sovereignty exact—spite of Lady Ann's gentle interference—spite of the domestics, by whom the sparers were surrounded—spite of her ladyship's obstructed articulation, the hurricane became so tremendous as forced the weaker party to take refuge in a distant apartment, whilst the stronger followed him thither to settle their difference, and, in her haste, overturned some of the dishes.

Lady Ann, less discomposed than the table, crossed her arms, looked confidently at the footmen, and asked if these sort of scenes often happened between their master and mistress?

My readers, who are not extremely conversant with the manners of high life, will probably conceive it a degradation from rank, and bordering on democratic principles, to hear that a lady of quality condescends to ask familiar questions of her own, or any other body's male-servant; yet a little learning in the school of fashion would soon eradicate such plebeian conceptions! On the contrary, they would every day see the proudest Peers and Peeresses, who scarcely bend a knee, or speak, without the most austere reserve, to the middle order of their own species, make no scruple in bending their stately minds to the capacities of the *very* meanest.—It is no uncommon spectacle to hear a lord or a lady, a duke or a duchess, not only talk of their own private affairs, or the affairs of the nation, which ought to be secret, before their domestics, but even put themselves still more in their power, by indiscriminately abusing their friends as well as their enemies, at their own tables. This is one reason why those keepers of *family* secrets and *family* opinions, hold

hold their places so much longer than the servants of middling people; and in such services they acquire an artificial sort of good breeding, which sets them entirely at their ease, when called upon to answer a question, as—

CHAP. II.

THE AUTHOR FLIES IN A RETROGRADE DIRECTION.

“DO such scenes often happen between your master and mistress?”

Being less inclined than my betters, to relish these sort of *mongrel* conversations—I mean, by my betters, so far as they may be better off than I am in worldly accommodations—equally averse to intermeddle in the broils of domestic warfare, I leave Lady Ann to finish her solitary meal, seasoned exactly to her palate, by *family* anecdote.—I also leave Sir Frederick, and the wife of his bosom, to adjust

just their difference without my assistance, and take a flying leap, to overlook that enchanting residence which had received to its sheltering solitude the half-worn body, but wholly harassed mind of Clarissa Isleworth.

The hour is nine—the night dark—the weather tempestuous; the ladies are removed to the drawing-room—the happy merchant remains a little longer, to smoke his pipe, and finish his pint of port.

If, “to be good is to be happy,” who will contend for the prize of happiness with a man so gracious in *thought*, so sincere in *word*, so benevolent in *deed*?

Wrapped in the mantle of soul-approving cogitations, he could not but reflect with joy, that from the moment his beloved ward had cast herself on his neck, to thank him for having emancipated her father, taken her under his own protection, and obtained for her the liberty of rejecting Lord Clarence, from that moment he saw the finger of peace spreading her pale cheeks, not indeed with the sanguine carmine of unimpaired health, but the soft rose-leaf colour, only to be extracted from internal contentment: he saw also beginning to renovate,

vate, that sweet, yet chaste vivacity so enlivening to her infant smiles, so eloquently speaking on her infant features, so playfully captivating in her manners, so innocently directing her expressions!"

He saw, or thought he saw her, exactly the same as when, on the most sad, the most fatal event of his life, he had resigned her into the hands of her dissipated mother!—"Yes," cried he, "dear sainted Mary! when we meet in heaven thou shalt not tell me that I have abandoned the child of our mutual affection!—thou shalt approve my cherishing care to keep alive that lamp of virtue in the soul which can only light her steps to the regions of thy blessedness."

Tears sprang to his eyes, inspired by the melancholy retrospection of that dear affection which had so tenderly bound to the heart of his now beatified Mary the child of their mutual adoption, mingled with the sweeter drops of gratitude to Heaven, for having made him the instrument to snatch that beloved innocent from the contaminating examples of a dissipated home, and the destructive pleasures of a corrupted public.

Reanimated by the subject of his contemplation, he laid down his pipe, and joined the ladies once more, to behold the effects of his own benevolence sparkling in the eyes, and reiterating the smiles of his favourite Clarissa.

Ring—ring—ring!—"What is the matter now?" cried Lady Ann, and ran to the apartment where the angry pair had so *mal-a-propos* conveyed themselves from the dinner-table to arrange their opinions.

The movements of curiosity are so much more rapid than the unwilling steps of duty, that her ladyship's appearance within the door superseded the domestics, whose attendance the bell did not yet cease to summon, and with very little filial respect for the parents of her husband, the question she had asked of herself she repeated to them, with this only difference, that what she then *said* she now *sung*, in her favourite words of—"Oh dear! what can the matter be?"

"Nothing, my dear, is the matter *now*," replied her delighted mother-in-law; "Sir Frederick and I perfectly understand each other—every thing is going on as it should do!"

— Your

"Your calculations, Madam," cried the Baronet, something between jest and earnest, "have hitherto been damn'd erroneous!—But send away the fellows—don't you see them waiting for their orders?"

"Fly, Callent!" cried she, to one of the men out of livery, "tell the coachman to put six of his fleetest horses to the travelling chaise, and mount three of the lightest postboys, for a drive of expedition—also tell Harris to get ready!" Then, turning to the footman, "Run as fast as you can to Captain Snug's—pray, Sir Frederick, where does the captain live?"

"No. 11, — Place."

"Oh, very well! don't forget the number; and, John, deliver this note—ask if there is any answer—get out of the servants if their mistress means to come—should they say she thinks it too late to dress, inform them that I do not see company till twelve."

"My pretty mamma!" exclaimed Lady Ann, I die with curiosity!—you kill me by inches! Where are you sending your coaches—your horses—your post-boys—your man-servant—and your woman-servant? Who is Captain Snug?
and

and who is the poor gentlewoman you send to invite to your ball at this time of day?"

"And who, damn me!" cried Sir Frederick, almost black in the face with passion, "authorises your ladyship to these impertinent freedoms? May the great devil of all fly away with the *mock* parson who made you the wife of Arthur!"

"Amen!" very devoutly responded Lady Ann; "No.," said she, with a sneer, "*that* my kind *nominal* papa has any real cause for displeasure. I have a *friend* who *assures* me that the marriage may be *annulled*, and offers to give *me* his own name in exchange for that which I have borrowed from your *illustrious* and *well-governed* family. I shall write Lord Benvour on the subject: but if he will not release me from the burthens of such anti-profits and anti-honours as are annexed to the house of Illeworth, there are *other* means by which a poor distressed wife *may* escape the terrible consequences of her *first* folly: and what is there a woman of *spirit* will think it difficult to sacrifice for the re-attainment of her forfeited liberty?"

Sir

Sir Frederick, as it may have been observed, was a man of more oaths than words, and his lady a woman of more words than wisdom: the former, therefore, took himself off in a hurricane of execrations, whilst the latter, by overflowing torrents of eloquence, tried to obliterate from the offended pride of Lady Ann, all recollection of the insult which had been offered to her rank and accomplishments. These endeavours ended happily, both ladies agreeing, that Sir Frederick was such a *nothing at all* man that *his* rage ought not to disturb *their* tranquillity.

Lady Ann's curiosity was now *more* than feasted, by the high-flavoured particulars of the *Snug* family, *their* connection with Sir Frederick, and her ladyship's *own* motive for sending Mrs. Snug a ticket for her ball, which, if she had not consented to do,"—And, just as she whispered something in the ear of her greedy confidant concerning the destination of the carriage and servants, one of them came to tell Lady Isleworth all was ready, but that the coachman wished her ladyship would let the horses remain in the stable till the storm was a little less violent; and that Mrs. Harris had fainted, on being told that she was to go out in such a tempest.

‘ Nonsense!’

“ Nonsense !” cried Lady Isleworth,—“ let them set out *immediately* ! What signifies rain and wind !—tell her she *shall* go !”

“ No,” said Lady Ann, “ tell her she shall *not* go !—run for my cloak, I am resolved to go myself !”

“ There I must interpose *my* authority !” rejoined the matron, in the most studied alarm—“ not for worlds would I expose to danger a life so precious !”

“ And not worlds should prevent me from following my own inclinations ! Yet keep up your terrors, my pretty mamma, keep them up all night if you can ; for they will give you charms to eclipse us all, and make even your bashaw turn from the bright eyes of his favourite sultana !”

“ How wild ! yet how agreeable !—Let me prevail, Lady Ann !”

“ Indeed I must go !”

“ My God ! and alone too !”

“ Well ! this objection is easily removed !—my plans are soon fixed—every thing that
is

is done in haste is so much better done than what one stops to consider about, that when I resolved to go I also resolved to take some body with me."

"Harris is such a *monster*, there cannot be room for you all!"

"I will have nothing to do with her *voluminous* materials, and Arthur is almost as *unwieldy*; but I know where he and Clarence are to meet, just at the hour of seven, to play at billiards, before they dress for their tavern dinner—so I shall just stop at the door, and enlist one of them for my escort."

"Charming!—charming!" exclaimed the delighted mother of a son so distinguished by a wife of talents, "I have not a single objection to this adjustment—it is like yourself, full of whim, and brim-full of discretion!—Yes, if Lord Clarence should be your escort, rather than Arthur, I confess it will please me better—it will be a delightful opportunity!"

Here the servant entered with Lady Ann's cloak, abruptly putting an end to the *finale* of her ladyship's unravelment, *why* her being attended by Lord Clarence would be

be so much more pleasing than if accompanied by her husband; and Lady Ann, throwing it over her shoulders, nodding a silent adieu ran to the carriage—jumped into it, without touching the step with her foot—and, throwing herself on the cushion, gave directions to stop at ———, from whence she was to issue he farther orders.

CHAP. III.

RATIONAL CONVERSATION.

“IT is a dreadful night,” said our British merchant, as he entered the drawing-room, where sat Mrs. St. Edmonds and Miss Isleworth—“some tiles are already blown from the house: I tremble for our noble fleets, and fear for the poor small craft which may be beating about at the mouth of the Channel.”

“Have you any ships, brother, that you expect to arrive about this time?” asked Mrs. St. Edmonds.

“I do

“ I donot know of any,” he replied.—“ But that man, my dear Elizabeth, who can only occupy himself with his *own* risks and his *own* profits, has, in comparifon, much more anxiety, and much lefs rational enjoyment, than he whose mind connects itfelf with the general good or evil deftiny of his fellow creatures.”

“ Oh!” cried Clariffa, “ to *this* exalted fentiment am I indebted for all the good I fhall ever be able to pra&ife—for all the evil I may be endowed with ftrength to avoid! I owe to *this* fublime fentiment that I am not a favage in manners, an infidel in morals!—I owe to it my paff instruction—my prefent happinefs. You was not my father—yet your tender care for my welfare has gone beyond paternal! Oh that Ifabella and Matilda had fhared in thofe favours which have been fo liberally fhowered on their more fortunate fifters!”

The natural energy with which fhe delivered her unftudied panegyric, did not fail to produce its effects. Mrs. St. Edmond’s, to whom, by this time, fhe had become extremely endeared, by a warm preffure of the hand, fignified her entire approbation; and Mr. Curry, affured his elegant protégée, that her fifters, for *her* fake, if they ever flood in
need

need of protection, should at all times find in him a protector, not less willing than able to serve them!

“Tell me, Clarissa,” said the merchant, as if to banish the serious air which hovered over and partly obscured the brilliancy of her countenance “tell me—was you ever in love?”

“What a question!” she replied, blushing scarlet-deep.

“Yet you *will* answer it, unless that frankness I once implanted in your mind has been totally eradicated by the all-spoiling finger of fashion.”

“You prove,” then, said she, trembling, “that the seeds you have sown there of truth and sincerity, have neither been forced from their soil or trodden under foot, I shall make you this short confession—that if I do love, it is *not* Lord Clarence—and, if I do hate, it is *not* Percival Bateman!” More she could have said, but something in the countenance of her friend checked the disclosure. “Do you mean, that it is the son of your mother’s other trustee to whom you are attached?” asked Mr. Curry.

“My

"My heart, dear Sir, tells me Lord Clarence is artful—insidious—designing, and I never *can* approve him!—Percival Bateman possesses my esteem, because he is candid—honest—honourable! and the opposite sentiments which I feel in the extreme for these gentlemen must determine "whether I have ever loved?"

From the moment Clarissa mentioned the name of Bateman, her kind guardian shewed symptoms of no common uneasiness; he often put his hand to his forehead—looked at her with earnestness—then muttered to himself, in which the words "unfortunate!—unlucky! were only distinguishable.

Miss Isleworth, whose eyes followed him through his well remembered favourite *home* exercise of traversing the apartment, could not but hear his half smothered expletives, nor fail to remark his disordered thoughts, as she finished what she would wish to be considered her confession, she arose, put her arm through his, and, strayed by his side, whilst he asked her many questions, of "how often she had met Percival Bateman in her walk through the forcing-ground of dissipation?—how often he had spoken to her? what he had said?"—endeavouring to sound the
length,

length, breadth, and depth, of all the little gallantries with which the dangerous young man, had besieged the heart of his favourite. Alas! the result was more favourable to his own hopes than to the candour of his fair ward, in whose replies, it must be confessed, was blended an equal proportion of truth and subterfuge. His concern for the charge he had undertaken extended to every possible direction where Clarissa's tranquillity of mind was open to the invasion of an enemy. Love he always considered as the most subtle of foes, and followed by an host of evils, wherever its success was opposed by paternal authority, or the impediments of fortune. Under this impression, he felt all the terrors of apprehension, lest she might have embarked her affections on a voyage, where the only returns that could be made for so rich a venture, were suspense, disappointment, and tender hearts, checked by hope or lacerated by despair;—and his troubles being nearly done away, he cried out—

“ Thank God it is no worse! The father is a scoundrell—but the son is a man of honour!

“ I do not even know Mr. Bateman!” replied the young lady, a little alarmed at the
unusual

unusual warmth with which her benign friend expressed himself when speaking of his brother guardian—"I never saw him in my life!—he never comes to us, but my mother frequently goes to him!—I have heard her say he is *very* obliging and that she did not know what she should do without him!"

"That may be all very true," observed Mr. Curry; "but, my dear child, take this truth from the lips which will not deceive you, that to this *rascal*, who, by your grandfather, was empowered with the management of your mother's money, is owing, in a great degree, all her difficulties—Present sweets may be future bitters.—I would bring him to justice, if I could; but these Christians, of Jewish principles, hid their transactions so secretly there is no getting at *proofs*, and without proofs nothing can be done!"

"I am glad," cried Clarissa, "that Percival does not inherit the same propensities!"

"And so am I," replied the merchant; "yet, answer me truly, do my eyes sparkle, when I tell you so?"

"They

“ They are so used to look kindly upon me,” said she, a little disconcerted by the archness of his countenance. “ that I am always equally delighted with their expression.”

“ Dearest girl! be on your guard how you think of this young man! He is amiable—the world say it—and I believe it: I should desire for you just such another husband—himself would be the very object of my election—but *my* Clarissa must never be the wife of Percival Bateman!”

She changed colour;—he did not seem observe her emotions, but continued.

“ Chance, some time ago, put it into my power to assist a poor family, starving under the scarcity of Bateman’s *patronage*; and yet the father of these little helpless wretches was to him in the three-fold capacity of clerk, secretary, and confidant. My small assistance, administered in the moment of need, created confidence; and, amongst other things, not much to the honour of his employer, he informed me, *unasked*, that Bateman had, on *your* account, sent his son out of the kingdom, and bound himself, by oath, to disinherit him, if he should
ever

ever marry a daughter from the house of Isleworth."

"Oh, my dear Mrs. St. Edmonds!" cried Clarissa, turning from the brother, and running towards the sister, who, resting her head on her hand, sat in full attention to the interesting conversation,—“Dear Madam! you are certainly not well, you look quite pale!”—I am sure you must be particularly indisposed! Let me run for your smelling-bottle!—I saw you lay it on your toilet-table—Yes, I know exactly where to find it!”—and off she flew!—not to execute the commission with which she had officiously charged herself, but to give vent to the tears that had been brewing in her dove-like eyes, from the moment that voice so loved, so respected, announced the sentence of her fate—“*My Clarissa must never be the wife of Perceval Bateman!*”

CHAP. IV.

THE BAULK.

NEITHER the merchant or his sister, who both guessed the real situation of her thoughts, endeavoured to detain her; on the contrary, they rather felt themselves gratified by her absence, which gave them an opportunity of talking over the affairs of her family, and congratulating each other on the acquisition they had made to their own circle of domestic enjoyments.

One quarter of an hour had elapsed, another was on the wane from the bosom of time, and no Clarissa returned!

“She has been much affected, perhaps, afflicted,” observed Mrs. St. Edmonds, “by your communication, my dear George!”

“I admit

“I admit the justness of your remark,” he replied! “I lament the effect, but do not repent the cause. I saw from the beginning, that her heart had yielded to the handsome person and cultivated understanding of an amiable youth, with whom a clandestine union must have been the infallible destruction of both.—I saw her on the brink of a precipice, her head giddy, her imagination intoxicated.—I snatched her from the danger, possibly with too little precaution. The suddenness of my exhortation, rather than the exhortation itself, has dismayed her spirits.—Such hurricanes in the human mind, as well as in the natural world, are always more violent than lasting. Trust me, Elizabeth, one hour’s sober reflection will repair all the depredations my communications may have occasioned.”

The last word was hardly pronounced, when Miss Illeworth burst into the room, pale as a spectre, and trembling all over, announcing, that by the light of the carriage moons, she had seen from her chamber window a chaise, drawn by six horses, driving up the avenue, adding, “that although she could not clearly distinguish objects, so as to be certain that the livery great-coats, worn by the servants were those of her own family, yet a dreadful *presentiment* had taken possession of her mind, that some how or

other she was concerned in the approaching cavalcade."

Her friends, though equally astonished at the arrival of visitors in such a style, at such an hour, and in such weather, would have laughed away her fears, when they were suddenly stopped by a violent knocking at the outer gate, nothing inferior to that which announces her Grace's or her Ladyship's return home from a ball or masquerade, at five, six, or seven o'clock in the morning, to the great annoyance of a drowsy neighbourhood—a knocking which redoubled Clarissa's trepidations, called additional colour to the faded cheeks of Mrs. St. Edmonds, and even discomposed the tranquil-minded merchant, who at all times was ready to relinquish the highest behest of ambition, to grasp at the lowliest offering from the hand of comfort.

"What can it be!" cried he, making but one step to the door, and holding it half opened, to see who the butler was ushering through the anti-chamber to the drawing room.—"Here is a lady!" continued he; "I never saw her before!—some stranger, I suppose, who seeks a shelter from the storm—be it ours to perform the duties of hospitality!"

"Is

"Is your master a hermit, that he shuts himself up in this out of the way place?" asked the stranger.

"It is the voice of Arthur's wife! cried Clarissa, "It is Lady Ann!"

Lady Ann at the same instant made her appearance.

The freedom of her ladyship's address being exactly the same in all places and to all people, she returned the distantly polite compliments of Mrs. St. Edmonds and her brother with a *dip* courtsey, a nod of the head, and the familiar declaration—"that they seemed to be a mighty comfortable humdrum party."

"Come," said she, forcing the reluctant hand of Clarissa, "it is a thousand pities to disturb such company; but, having turned knight-errant, I must carry you off."

"By whose authority, Madam," sternly interrogated the merchant, "do you come to rob me of what is my own by *purchase*?"

"My dear man! don't talk to me of purchase, for I know nothing about buying and
C-4 selling!

telling!—nor put yourself in a passion, which can answer no end in the world but to make me laugh!—Come along, Clary, we have a stupid tedious road to measure back—Lady Isleworth will be distracted if we are not the first and best dressed figures in her divine circle!”

“Indeed I *can* not, nor I *will* not enter it, *this* night at least, Lady Ann, unless commanded to return with you by Mr. Curry, whose kindness to my parents has intitled him to unlimited obedience on the part of their daughter,” replied Clarissa, in accents which the affront offered to her friends rendered spirited, if not passionate.

Transfixed with astonishment by Lady Ann’s easy assurance, Mr. Curry and his sister stood gazing at each other, (for her ladyship had declined their invitation to be seated; till, roused by the energetic resistance of his ward, the patient merchant, almost out of patience, again repeated the question she had before evaded to answer, namely, “by whose authority she came to dis sever from his family any one of its members?”

“Authority!” she retorted, with a disdainful smile, “*Miss* —what’s your name?—over my own conduct I have never yet acknowledged any authority, and never *will*.”

“Enough,

“ Enough, Madam!—the declaration itself is a sufficient voucher for your veracity, and a sufficient apology for your conduct!—I could not have been, at my age, so deficient in the science of human economy, as to misunderstand the style of your ladyship’s education. I did not presume to ask by *whom*, or by *what* rules your *general* actions are regulated—I am no farther concerned in their government than to be informed, on the *present* occasion, if I am indebted for the honour of Lady Ann Illeworth’s visit, and her intentions respecting *my* ward, to her *own* condescension and her *own* plans, or to the commands of Sir Frederick and Lady Illeworth?”

“ Bless us, father Adam! what a chatter is here about nothing at all!—Clarissa must go with me, and by command of the higher powers!”

“ I have done, Madam!—there is no more to be said! Prepare, my dear, to attend her ladyship;—it is not the office of friendship to set aside parental authority, or strengthen the hands of disobedience.”

“ Well, that is a very wise speech!—to get your cloak directly, child!”

Miss Isleworth would not dispute the orders of her benefactor, though she obeyed them with evident reluctance; and, having received his promise of seeing her on the morrow, as well as a tender embrace from Mrs. St. Edmonds, she followed Lady Ann, who, after many violent struggles, and much ineffectual resistance to Mr. Curry's attending them to the carriage, permitted him to lead her forward; but, withdrawing her hand as the step was let down, rushed into it so precipitately as, together with the stooping attitude in which she seated herself, created in the merchant's guarded mind certain suspicions, which the better to ascertain, he called one of his own servants, who stood within the door, to screen the lighted flambeau he held in his hand from the devastating effects of the storm, as if for the better accommodation of Clarissa: but no sooner did its reflection disperse the darkness within, than he beheld a man, who seemed to conceal himself from observation behind Lady Ann, which made him say—

“Your Ladyship, I see, does not want a companion!—you have *one* already, and another will incommode the party!”

“Non-

“ Nonsense!—it is only Lord Clarence!—he is one of *us*!——we don’t mind a little squeezing—so come along!”

“ In your *present* situation, Madam, I cannot permit Miss Isleworth to accompany you!—Have the goodness to make my excuses, and tell Sir Frederick I shall wait on him to-morrow!”

Expostulations and impertinent threatenings in vain assailed him from within the carriage—he ordered the door to be shut—the postillions to proceed—and re-conducted the overjoyed Clarissa back to the comforts of his own fire-side.

CHAP. V.

REVERTS BACK, AND PROCEEDS FORWARD

BALKED as to the meditated purpose of their dismal excursion through a night of terrors, such as witches sport in, when minded

to perform their mischief on the bosom of old ocean—Lady Ann's will not only *disputed* but *entirely* over-ruled—Lord Clarence suffering in his passion, wounded in his pride—all these circumstances seeming to combine in battle array to untranquillize the minds of those noble *platonick* travellers, it may reasonably be supposed, that however well they might have agreed before these calamities befel them, they afterwards became very bad company to each other.

Every species of philosophy has its distinct operations, its different directions. The ancient system teaches its pupils, that “to live *well* is to die *happy*.”—The modern says, “it matters not how a man dies, provided he lives a life of passion, vice, and luxury, to his own soul's satisfaction; because, when the heart ceases to beat to the joys of conviviality, the soul's sensations are *for ever* silent.” They allow of no futurity—they boast in the vigour of health, that death, when he has done his worst, can only blind their eyes and stop their breath—they see not the dreadful mystery of a future existence, till the hand of sickness and despair tear from their aching eyes the bandage of delirium, and shews them what they *are*, and
what

what they *might* have been, either *too* soon for conviction, or else *too* late for repentance.

Amongst the description of these sticklers for materiality, there were none who had more distinguished themselves than Lord Clarence and Lady Ann Isleworth. Their acquaintance had been short—but minds congenial spurn at the officious efforts of time to forge the chain of mutual attachment. Their morning interview had been productive of the most pleasant consequences:—he had sworn, by his Maker, to renounce the whole sex, for the sake of *one* beautiful object; and that *one* beautiful object, jealous of his former attachment to Clarissa, had bound him, by oaths equally solemn, that he would not only renounce her for ever, but in so public a manner, at the ball to be given by Lady Isleworth, as, she flattered herself, would complete the confusion of her rival, the triumph of her own charms, and the gratification of her insatiable envy, hatred, and malice, for every thing in the form of woman which had youth, beauty, or virtue, to recommend the possessor beyond the bounds of partial admiration. Publicity of fame had been the aim of her short career in the world of fashion, in so much that she had been heard to say, that she would rather be
talked

talked of for a misdemeanor than not be talked of at all : and, with these *rare-ripe* constitutional qualities, it is no wonder if, when she made her elopement, and that not the *first* of her indiscretions, Lord Benvour, rather than deplore his loss, should congratulate himself on getting rid of a daughter, whose conduct reflected little credit on his art of managing children, and less honour on the illustrious dignity of his progenitors.

It would be hard to determine whose mortification was most severe, on the disclosure made by Sir Frederick of his secret negociation with the merchant, which had terminated in Clarissa's absence ;—whether Lady Isleworth, on having her brilliant schemes all defeated, and being forced to resign the extatic delight of beholding the countess-elect figure away *en bride*—to hear herself wished joy by a crowded assembly, who, but for that fortunate event, would have been amongst the first to ridicule her morning levee, notwithstanding many of them might, or *ought* to have been in the same situation :—or, whether Lady Ann, though better able to govern her emotions, did not experience a still more deadly pang, that the finest opportunity in the world must now be lost of exposing her husband's family to the insults of a multitude, all honourable

honourable or right honourables, and the dear cherished hope of exulting in his sister's humiliation.

If it be a true observation, "that in the married life, when *one* is wise *both* are happy," it ceatrinly must have been owing to the wisdom of Lady Isleworth, in obliging Sir Frederick with a card for Mrs. Snug, that Clarissa was recalled, and conjugal felicity restored.

But what is conjugal felicity, compared with the felicity of an envious woman, about to realife her interrupted plans, of drawing down all manner of mischief on the defenceless head of her rival? If the joy of Lady Isleworth was great, that of Lady Ann was still greater.

Such was the disposition of her charmingly agitated spirits, when she called at ——— to take up Lord Clarence, where, in the morning, her ladyship had appointed him to wait till half past seven, to receive her farther and fuller directions on black and white, namely, how she chose he should conduct himself in the arduous undertaking of declaring off, when expected to declare on!—"The affair," she observed, "was so delicate, that to do it *well*,
and.

and do it *effectually*, would at least take her two hours in arranging ”

As to Arthur, though pretending she should find him with Lord Clarence, *she* knew no more of his retrograde movements, than he did of her ladyship's steady perseverance in the whole art of intriguing.

Before they reached the end of their drive, in spite of blowing, raining, thundering, and lightning, the soft breathing adulation of her companion so harmonized the spirits of Lady Ann, that, amused with a second edition of his already published volume of compliments, she did not very much regret their being compelled to return as they came; but, on the contrary, meditated most pleasantly, how to make that mortification, from which Clarissa had escaped, fall with double weight on the devoted head of Lady Isleworth.

Lord Clarence, too much the slave of her charms to oppose any of her wishes, had put himself entirely under her conduct, and was set down, at eleven o'clock, at the distance of a few streets from his own house, to which a hackney-coach conveyed him, just as his valet had got
every

every thing in readiness, to exchange the mourning habits of widowhood for the splendid habiliments of a bridegroom.

CHAP. VI.

TRAGI COMIC.

LADY Isleworth, in all the agonies of expectation, sat down at her toilet, half an hour before the return of Lady Ann was announced by a carriage stopping at the door, which produced such a prodigious sound, through the clattering of so many horses feet on the pavement, that had any other interfered, even the sound of the last trumpet, it is to be feared her ladyship would have paid it very little attention, till she had observed from her window who had alighted from the travelling chaise: and having seen none but her daughter-in-law descend from it, she *then* could not have regarded *any* summons, natural or supernatural—because, with her hair half-curled, her face half painted, in the most possible pathetic attitude of tragedy, she sunk down up-

on the floor, on beholding the carriage drive off, and no Clarissa left behind!

Lady Ann was just in time to assist at the resurrection of her ladyship's bodily faculties; but those of the soul seemed to have taken a flight beyond the regions of sense, when informed of the cruel merchant's cruel detention of her daughter, the pre-destined Countess of Clarence!

No child could be more delighted with the exhibition of a pantomime, than Lady Ann with the scene now under representation; she was herself a principal object in the farce—the one eye sorrowful the other joyful—her tongue sympathising, her thoughts reviling: the former joining in the inharmonic execrations of an enraged maniac, heaping coals of fire on the head of poor Curry—the latter occupied in contriving how she might give additional torment to the already tormented. With this view, she persuaded Lady Isleworth to believe, that no real disadvantage could occur from the absence of Clarissa. “I will take care,” said she, “to procure the congratulations of the whole assembly, both for your Ladyship and Lord Clarence, which you know will be as *public* a declaration of his intentions as if he were to make them in her presence.”

By

By many arguments of the same tendency the cure was performed ; again Lady Isleworth breathed—again she smiled—and again she took her station at the toilet.

“ Dear vain fool ! ” whispered Lady Ann, feebly as she tripped to her own apartment, “ I could almost doat on the folly which is so very amusing !—My *pretty* mama ! I am only going to use *your* vanity as boys use *their* birds—let it smoothly out by a string, to draw it back with a jerk ! ”

Mrs. Snug, though the last invited, was the first person to make her appearance, being no mean ornament in figure, face, and dress, to Lady Isleworth's drawing-room ! the former, tall, and of a statue-like proportion, might have served for the model of another Venus, if the graces of fashion had been added to the cunning workmanship of nature—she had moulded the limbs to perfection—education alone could have taught them their polished movements—education had never come in the way of Mrs. Snug—she held her arms ill, and walked worse—the beauty of her features, particularly eyes, mouth, and teeth, was not inferior to that of her person—her age did not appear to exceed twenty—
and

and the modesty she had expelled from her mind seemed to have taken refuge in her countenance. Add to all these *agremens* a splendid gold-spangled mullin, with high feathers, and it will be thought not very extraordinary, that, being presented by Sir Frederick to his accomplished wife, she should declare the favourite of her husband a *very charming creature*!

This *very* charming creature excited nothing like admiration when announced to Lady Ann. Too pretty to claim her approbation, she was forced to put up with her contempt; she stared poor Mrs. Snug full in the face—looked scornfully—laughed affectedly—and, turning on her heel, said, in an audible whisper, “*Mon Dieu*, what a fright!”

A splendid circle soon formed itself round her vivacious ladship, who delighted to inform them that Lady Illeworth was sitting at the head of the room, to receive joy on the approaching marriage of her daughter, who, to avoid the same ceremony, had taken a trip to the country, leaving her mother and Lord Clarence to sustain the whole weight in their own persons.

Sir James Collington, (to whom Lord Clarence unboomed himself at the tavern, after having, to get himself out of one scrape, plunged into another,) feeling mortified that the clog he *then* engaged to take off his hands was not to make her appearance, of course that he should be non-suited, flatly contradicted her ladyship, with certain vulgar phrases, which like weeds transplanted from the hedge to the garden become flowers, so likewise are naughty words transferred from the mouth of a peasant to that of a gentleman, considered not only *admissible* but highly ornamental to the most polished societies.

“ I’ll be d—d, Lady Ann,” said he, “ if ever Clarence nooses himself again! Because a man has *once* had his shackles knocked off by accident, is he to expect that the devil will *always* stand at his elbow to do him a good office! I’ll bet your Ladyship, or any person in this company, a thousand guineas, and take the losing odds, that Clarence, if you fairly ask him the question, will tell you, by G—d! that he has not the remotest thought of a serious attachment!”

“ Pish!” cried Lady Ann, “ you know nothing about it!”

“ Yes!

“ Yes! I know, that amongst your whole sex he has not a greater favourite than your Ladyship!—yet, if you were single to-morrow.”——

“ Have done, I charge you!” said she, interrupting him, with a look of displeasure, but a strong propensity to gratification, “ I wish Lord Clarence was come to defend himself against your incenderous charges!—Profane the subject no more with thy unhallowed lips! but follow us to Lady Isleworth; and, if you cannot teach your hardened heart to recant from its wicked errors, keep them to yourself, and not let them fly about to discompose her ladyship’s tranquillity.”

“ Lead on,” he replied; “ there is no better actor on the stage of life than I am, when invited to play the hypocrite in a love scene.”

Lady Ann was not the only person delighted or interested with this lively altercation;—every male that had them, whether real or artificial, shewed his white teeth—every female, with screwed up features, gave the lie to their sentiments, by declaring they *hoped* to witness his defeat, and the triumph of Lord Clarence, or should be extremely sorry for

for the fate of *poor* Miss Illeworth, nothing being so detrimental to a young woman's establishment as being *talked* of for a marriage that went *off*, nobody knew *how* !”

Mrs. Snug alone was absent from this immense circle of *well-wishers* to the house of Illeworth ; the bashful creature had taken shelter under the wing of domestic patronage, by occupying the very next place to the lady of the mansion, who began to think it an age before the whole assembly crowded round her throne, headed by Lady Ann, to pay the tribute of congratulations, which her *folly* flew out to meet, and her *vanity* panted to receive .

C H A P. VII.

RIDDLE ME RIDDLE REE!

THE Queen of Sheba, at King Solomon's court, must, in the article of finery, have found herself outdone, under the roof, and by the wife of a simple baronet, had she lived in these our days of latitude and invention.

All those elegant ornaments Lady Isleworth had borrowed from a jeweller, after having deposited in the keeping of a friend, or more properly speaking, pawned those gems she had cajoled out of the cautious Bateman, for the purpose of decorating Clarissa on the bridal declaration, were now profusely bestowed about her own person.

The sound of—"I give your Ladyship joy!" pronounced by so many tongues of fashionable notoriety at the same moment, produced on her animal spirits that sort of pleasurable sensation by which we see young children agitated when one presents a toy, or carry them to a puppet-show. With so much avidity had she prepared to answer the compliments of the noble multitude, that many of them received the most gracious returns, even before their occasional compliments had been delivered.—Nothing could be more delighted than her ladyship—nothing more diverted than her guests!—Thus it is that the fool and the knave derive their gratification from the same source.—The frog sports in the water, and the mischievous boy smilingly whirls the pebble doomed for its destruction.

Lady Isleworth opened her own ball with her own minuet, which, it must be confessed, she managed

managed with as much easy elegance as the best automaton of modern ingenuity could have attained to ; not even the fashionable one to be seen at Spring-garden, if formed to dance as well as play, could have excelled her.—Sir Frederick seemed to have forgot that his *mistress* was present, and looked only to his *wife* !

Either from fear of not doing so well, or the inherent love of those romping figures, which is a sort of invitation to the unrestrained freedom of hilarity, none of the ladies attempted to follow the example set them by Lady Isleworth, except Mrs. Snug, who, having advanced to the top of the room, led by Sir Frederick, was obliged to be re-seated, unable to resist the general cry for the commencement of country-dances and cotillions. The baronet, who had once before seen his favourite *dulcinea* exhibit in a similar performance at an Easter ball, not much to her own advantage, was far from repining at this interruption to a second display of the same untaught accomplishment ; but as all people, taught or untaught, will *run* or *hop* some where or other when a figure is begun, he stood her up at the foot of the set, and placed himself *vis-à-vis* as her partner.

D

No

No rhetoric could prevail on Lady Isleworth to——

“Come and trip it as you go,

“On the light fantastic toe!”

—She even resisted the incitements of her beloved faro. Every thing gave place to anxiety for the appearance of Lord Clarence, who, fatigued either with his *short* drive or *long* love-story, threw himself on a sofa on his return from Enfield—slept three hours—and, not till just before the supper-rooms were opened, was a name so important to her happiness announced by the groom-porter, when, flying to meet him at the door, she exclaimed—

“My dear Lord! what has detained you?—I am half dead with expecting you!—Did you ever ever hear of such a wretch as that Corry?—How provoking that you could not bring back Miss Isleworth, when you were so good to take the trouble of going to fetch her!—I found it extremely difficult to sustain, in my own person, all the flattering compliments I have received on your Lordship’s account!”

His Lordship, with well-affected surprise, as if quite unprepared for an attack so *very* particular, stepped back a few paces, and opened his eyes

eyes to a most enormous stretch, on perceiving those of Lady Ann, with five hundred more as bright as her own, observing his motions.—Some from the dancers—some from the card-tables, all had collected together, forming a self-impennelled jury, to decide on the cause before argued, whether Lord Clarence *would* or would not avow himself the lover of Miss Isleworth?—and, without one dissenting voice, it was argued *nem. con.* by the evidence of his own words, “that it *never would be a match!*”

Advancing with a slower step than he retreated, and in that sort of equivocal accent which leaves the hearer to put what construction pleases his humour on the doubtful expressions of a double meaning, he replied, with the most enviable *nonchalance*, that, not having the honour to perfectly understand why *he* should have been the cause of incommoding her ladyship with the burthen of so many compliments, he must refer to *her* candour for an explanation.”

Inspired by resentment, if not by wisdom, with a sarcastic smile, “she desired the reference might be removed from her jurisdiction to the court of his own conscience, which could much better give him the information he demanded.”

“ My inclinations,” said he, gayly, “ are so much dispersed amongst this charming circle of your Ladyship’s friends, that at present it is impossible to collect them for any sort of investigation — Let us agree, then, to postpone our amicable disputation to” —

“ *Doomsday!*” interrupted the friend of Lord Clarence, whose words were drowned in the united chorus of *joy giving* from an hundred pretty mouths, all opening at the same time, for the evident purpose of drawing from his lordship *one great, one decisive* negative, which did not fail in its effects.

First casting his keen dark eyes on Lady Isleworth, then on her visitors, “ What,” he exclaimed, “ can have occasioned these flattering, but to me extremely mysterious greetings — I *cannot* feel myself so *highly* distinguished, without signifying my wish to be informed why I am made the object of such universal notice ?”

Before her ladyship could have determined whether to treat this appeal as a passing jest or as downright earnest, it was announced by more than one officious voice, “ that the congratulations offered by the *friends* of Lady Isleworth, proceeded from the very sensible interest they

had

had taken in his lordship's approaching nuptials with the daughter of Sir Frederick."

"They devil they do!" cried he; then added—"With all the admiration for the beauty, virtues, and merit of *that* lady, I have not the presumption to think the addresses of a forlorn widower would be accepted, *even* had I the temerity to offer them!"

Nothing could be more decisive than *this* declaration, that his lordship *desired* to be thought perfectly independent of an affair which agitated so many fair bosoms, some with jealousy, some with curiosity, and all with envy. Every eye turned on Lady Isleworth, seeming to say—"Well, Madam, what will you do now?"—when suddenly the volcano of indignation kindled: but before the inflammable gas could force its passage through the bowels of speech, Lord Clarence whispered something in her ear—she gave him her hand—he led her apart;—the few minutes their private conference lasted must have been employed very much to the purpose, as it banished all that was terrible, and restored all that was pleasant, to the countenance of Lady Isleworth.

Sir Frederick unobserved by the parties engaged, kept himself in such a position as to hear

hear all that passed, from the commencement to the conclusion of his wife's folly. He did not miss a word of the unqualified renunciation uttered by Lord Clarence, of all pretensions to the honour of his alliance ; yet, either from personal fear, should he call upon his lordship to eat his words, or from some other as laudable motive, he became blind, deaf, insensible, affecting to make it be believed the whole of his attention was devoted to the amusement of Mrs. Snug, who, feeling herself neglected, if not entirely overlooked, had taken her seat close at his elbow : but seeing her ladyship return from the conference with head erect—eyes dancing—cheeks glowing—smiles dimpling—and mounted on the highest stile of exultation, he partook of the general opinion which, very much against their will and pleasure, every spectator was forced to adopt, *namely*, that whatever reasons Lord Clarence might have for advancing a public declaration, Miss Isleworth had him safe enough.

His Lordship still conducting the triumphant mother of Clarissa, they were followed to the supper-rooms by the whole disappointed multitude, who, having fondly expected a very different termination to the family affairs, could ill brook the visible signs of delight, by which
those

those of mortification had been so *unaccountably* superceded on the countenance of their *profuse* entertainer.

Only one person present, except Lord Clarence himself, but was completely imposed on by appearances. Lady Ann had given him his cue; and he had restored the spirits of her *pretty mama* without exceeding the limits of his instructions.

CHAP. VIII.

TRICKS AT A TAVERN.

ARTHUR ISLEWORTH, the inheritor of his father's vices, and his mother's extravagance, had dined that day at a tavern frequented by rooks, who fared sumptuously on the well-plumed

Plumed stray pigeons which art or accident threw in their way.

He had been met in the morning at a billiard-table, by the president of this HONOURABLE society, who, understanding him to be the heir of a baronet, just arrived at the age of man, and lately married to the heiress of a rich peer, thought him an object on which himself and company might speculate with advantage.

Accordingly the colonel (which rank he really did bear in the army) challenged his new acquaintance to a trial of skill—allowed that he should obtain a compleat victory—acknowledged an infinite superiority over his own play—paid his losses, with as good a grace as the wily corporal lays down the national money for a promising recruit—and, with no less triumph, afterwards presented him to his associates at their club dinner.

Arthur, though extremely delighted with his entertainers, would have departed after each had drank his two bottles; but the colonel and his *corps* prevented the emigration, by formally mounting a guard over him, one on
a side

a side being placed within the door, to whom the glass was regularly handed, till relieved by others at the expiration of every ten minutes.

This whole farce was conducted with such mirthful conviviality, that all farther caution became unnecessary. Loaded dice and marked cards were introduced, at a season when their *visitor's* very small portion of discernment was quite overwhelmed, though still he retained enough of vivacity to smile at his own undoing,

Having appropriated to their uses all the cash he madly produced, one of the party, pretending to be equally unfortunate, equally poor, and equally exasperated at his companions refusing to play with them on *credit*, proposed that they should stake whatever was valuable about their persons, swearing he would run that scoundrel through the body who did not plank to their full value in yellow boys.

Every man's purse, which the moment before had glided into the pocket of its owner, now sprang back on the table with valorous alacrity, to answer the drawcanfir's challenge.

Several articles were produced by the *decoy*, and the duck entered the pool, from whence he was not suffered to depart till his best feathers were all plucked.

At three o'clock in the morning they put poor Arthur into a chair that was to convey him to his mother's assembly, faithfully promising to follow, as soon as they could make themselves ready for the honour of an introduction to her ladyship's drawing-room, whither their intoxicated dupe, being in a state not exactly to know whether he rose *winner* or *loser*, strenuously invited them.

But had he known the worst of his condition, he would have done the same thing; because, when *least* in his senses he was always *most* in good humour—when *least* *human* the most *humane*—and civilized the *most*, when brutalized to a certain degree of inebriation, at which pitch he had happily arrived when he separated from his new friends, leaving behind him a superb watch of Lady Ann's, which he had taken out to get regulated—a plain repeater of his own—a gold *looking* snuff-box, to be filled with rappee, picked up by his mother at a pawn-broker's the intended present, or rather peace-offering, to Bateman, for the forced

forced loan of her own diamonds, till she could return their likeness to his keeping, copied by Dovy—massy knee and shoe buckles of *sterling* gold—large wrist-buttons—all the gift of his god-mother and grand-aunt Lady Bridget Isleworth, on his coming of age.

Disburdened of so many weighty articles, the chairmen soon trotted with their insensible fare to the hall of reception, where the standing still of hisradle roused his slumbering faculties—the doors of the supper-rooms were just thrown open—to them he hastened veering as little from the straight line of direction as could have been expected.

Sitting down at the upper end of the largest table, where his mother presided on all such occasions, his vacant eyes dwelt on the splendid board, over which luxury had spread all her enchantments: suddenly they became visionless—his face dropped upon his arms—his arms reclined over as many covers as came in their way, and so totally exclude the powers of sound, as well as of sight, that he was alike impenetrable to the distant as to the near approach of the festive multitude, though their voices were mighty as the winds, and their motions tumultuous as the waves.

Aff&ation

Affectation lent her own voice to assist the exclamation of Lady Isleworth, on perceiving her place at the table pre-occupied by the son of her dotage, not only in compleat dishabille, but snoring with all the vulgarity of a peasant boy, run down by hard labour.

The frenchified "*Mon Dieu!*" and the *italianized* scream of her ladyship, superceded the sarcastic laugh, which her gay companions might have tried to suppress, if Arthur's wife had not taught them, by her own example, that to smother their mirthful emotions was a ceremony which would be dispensed with.

"Oh, he has been robbed and murdered!" cried Lady Isleworth, as she examined the deficiencies in his dress, and endeavoured to rouse him.

"Robbed indeed!" repeated Lady Ann, twittering with delight at the disgrace to which he exposed himself—"He is *only* drunk!—Pray let the monster be carried to his chamber!—I cannot bear the sight of him!"

"How unfeeling!" drawled out her ladyship, and was giving orders that physical assistance

assistance should be immediately procured, when Arthur, starting on his feet, called out—

“ Oh! d—n me, you are come at last! —but 'tis all over, and I have been asleep these five hours!”

“ He is worse than drunk, he is mad!” screamed Lady Ann, and took shelter on the arm of Lord Clarence.

“ Arthur, my dear, how are you?”—where is the hurt you have received?” asked his pathetic mama.

“ The hurt is *here!*” replied Lady Ann, laughing, and significantly pointing to her head.

Instead of answering his mother's question, the half-opened eyes of Arthur, which had been stupidly staring about him in search of his tavern friends, now fixed on his wife, and staggering towards her, besides telling her she was cursed handsome, he insisted on saluting her, and would have been mighty affectionate, but for the interference of Sir Frederick, who, remembering that he had often heard Mrs. Snug declare she always fell into hysterics at sight,

fight of a drunken man, solely to guard her delicate feelings, dragged his son from the company, which he so stubbornly opposed, unless he was first allowed to kiss the hand of his wife, that, instigated by the advice of Lord Clarence, she submitted to the operation, which, when performed, lifting it to his face, she gave him such a stroke, that, had there been one spark of fire in his soul it must have flown out at his eyes.

“Go, brute!” cried she, “for a brute thou art, make the best of thee!—In every sense of the word thou art a brute!”

“Charming spirit!” lisped Lady Isleworth, as Sir Frederick gave her son into the hands of servants to take him off the stage—“Charming spirit!—But I hope, my dear, the poor boy will not take your sweet playfulness for any thing *less* kind than what you intended to express!”

“Oh, it is impossible he should misunderstand it!” replied she, gayly.

“I thought so!” said her ladyship, taking her place at the table—“Poor thing, he is really violently warm!—I wish he may not have a brain fever!”

“You

"Your wish Madam," retorted Lady Ann, with indescribable archness, "arises from the very bosom of certainty!—he never *will*—indeed he never *can* have a *brain fever*!"

CHAP. IX.

THE LIE.

LIKE the majority of mankind, I am now about to trample over the most precious gift of Heaven—misapplied by some, but desired by *all*. To the studious—to the industrious—to the rational—*time* has no useless hour in his train; the reasonable distribution between rest and labour, gives to each its due value. But the sons and daughters of riotous notoriety calculate otherwise, and those moments only are estimated by them which, clothed in darkness and winged with mirth, dance before them to the very mouth of that bottomless pit where lurks destruction!

Lightly

Lighly as Lady Illeworth and her court of Comus respected the lapse of time, I feel no greater inclination to mark its progress; but having dispatched the company to their several homes, after a splendid *déjeuné, à l'aube du jour*, all except Lord Clarence, who remained behind, in chat with Lady Ann, to a latter hour than sunrising; and having sent the mistress of the revels to yawn over her toilet—scold her Abigail—lament the decay of her cardpuise—and do every thing but say her prayers; behold I bring Sir Frederick, mounted on a handsome blood-mare, to the door of Mr. Curry, in Broad-street, intending from thence to have shaped his course of Enfield, if he did not find the merchant already in his counting house.

Never was courage more fugitive—never the thoughts of man more complicated never the head less calculated for the dispatch of business than Sir Frederick's, when informed the gentleman for whom he required was already arrived.

It was the first time he had felt the whole of his untoward predicament; and, instead of alighting, he began to whistle the very tune
which,

which, of all others, was ever the most discordant to the harmonic ear of his lady.

The groom who patiently attended, holding his own horse by the bridle, was not in the least surprised at this sudden indecision, because such changes had frequently fallen under his observation; but the merchant's servant, who respectfully waited on the step to receive the baronet's commands, or conduct him to the house, seeing he made no effort either to speak or alight, and being unaccustomed to attend visitors who only stopped at his master's door to whistle, concluded the poor gentleman must be insane, and probably would have turned back, if Sir Frederick had not motioned him to stay where he was, having just then decided the following question, by which his few senses were before occupied, "whether it would not be better to return home and send a written apology, than to face the purchaser of his Westmoreland estate?" who, his conscience told him, might, if he pleased, get rid of his engagement, having, by demanding back his daughter the preceding evening, himself committed the first breach in their contract.

A lucky thought occurred—a lie must be told! And what of that?—A lie, only fabricated

cated to rescue fame or screen property, was a sin of no greater magnitude, by comparison, than a grain of sand to the mighty Alps, in his own, or in the catalogue of licensed privileges to *noblemen*, gentlemen, and *others* of a certain description!

A thousand lies passed in review before him, always ready to do him occasional service: one only he retained—it was but a little one—it nestled on his tongue, whilst the confederate lips covered it with a smile; and his no longer reluctant steps brought him to the awful presence of that man who, in the present situation of his finances, he would less willingly offend than his Maker!

Whatever pains it might have cost him to appear unembarrassed, his gaiety felt a momentary check from the cold, not to say stern reception, which met his advances, to that sort of condescending familiarity which superiority of rank is apt to consider grateful to the vanity of an inferior. Although so ill-received by the merchant, that had Sir Frederick been obliged to forge, instead of utter a falsehood, his confusion must have totally overpowered his invention;—*but* the lie *was* ready and out it came!

"D—n me, if I did not expect *this!*" said he, with a mortified air, dropping the hand which had been scornfully rejected—"Will you hear my defence?"

"I intended, Sir, to have spared you the trouble of coming to me, by attending you this morning at your own house; and last night signified my intentions to your daughter-in-law, Lady Ann, who, by *your authority*, came to demand the return of Miss Isleworth, contrary to the *spirit* and *meaning* of our late agreement.

"The devil take me, Curry, if that epitome of all sin and wickedness ever kicked up a row in your family by *my authority*! There is but one greater fool in the world than Arthur's wife, and that is *my own!*—between them they hatched this cursed scheme to set us at variance. My good friend, it could only have been baffled by your prudence, who most cleverly jockeyed them by holding the reins so tight that they could not get at the poney. It is to return my thanks for your care of my daughter—to vindicate myself, by telling the *exact truth*—and to expose the trick which has been played me, that I wait upon you at this early hour—I declare to God I have not been in bed all night!"

Frivolous

Frivolous and contemptible as the address, mode, and manners of his ward's husband was ever considered by the respectable patron of Miss Illeworth, that very respectability, the growth of honour, integrity, and candour, which marked his character, was the straight path by which credulity made its way to the precincts of his better understanding, and there established the most implicit faith as to the baronet's veracity.—He pitied his folly, abhorred his vices; *but* that a *lying* spirit should take possession of any human being who had to support the dignity of a gentleman, never entered into his imagination.

So much for the merchant's circumscribed knowledge of *modern* gentlemen, *modern* dignity, and *modern* indulgences.

Sir Frederick's vivacity, as if dependent on the smile or frown of his *monied* friend, rekindled with the good humour which now banished all reserve from his own countenance—no more was said of the breach in their agreement, which had been made by the ladies without his concurrence—the next day was appointed for the meeting of their several conveyancers, to finally adjust the purchase.

Before

Before they parted, the baronet told the merchant in confidence, that without acquainting his family what were his intentions, the moment the business with him was concluded, he should set out for his borough, to which he could not be returned under five thousand pounds, being stoutly opposed by two candidates—one from the east, with Fortunatus's purse in his possession—the other a ministerial man, to whom all the treasury avenues were thrown open.

Mr. Curry would have persuaded Sir Frederick from his hazardous project, yet felt very little disappointment at finding his counsel rejected, well knowing, that in the way to ruin there was more roads than one, and that no human foresight could bar them *all* against the wild career of fools and madmen.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

WHAT MAY HAPPEN.

WHETHER from similarity of taste, concatenation of events, or emulation in the science of squandering, it so happened, that as Sir Frederick slowly walked his horse through Fleet-street, the self same ornamented watch which, by the wary owner's want of faith so marvelously escaped the grasp of Lady Isleworth, inspired him with like eagerness to become its possessor. It was an offering at the shrine of beauty, which would not have disgraced Mark Anthony to present, or the Queen of Egypt to accept: but, whilst he is bearing it in triumph to the fair hands of Mrs. Snug, his lady is no less busily employing herself at home in providing for her own interest; and though they take different ways, it will bring them exactly to the same point at *last*.

Unable to sleep, from the variety of cogitations which took possession of her head, as she
resigned

resigned it to her pillow, some of the most brilliant, others of the most perplexing tendency, she started from her bed, and, without disturbing any part of the family, wrapped in a long flannel dressing-gown, sat down before her toilet.

In her calculation of having the jewels borrowed from Bateman re-copied by Dovy, she forgot to estimate how long it must unavoidably be before they were ready for delivery, nor had, till that morning, bestowed one thought on the fatal consequence inevitably attending her breach of promise, should she fail to restore them at the given time—no less than a disclosure, from the exasperated guardian, of many little mysterious dealings between them, hitherto so well concealed from all eyes and ears but their own.

Something must be done to prevent this threatened disaster; and no better occurred than to impose on him the *first* copy, instead of *waiting* for a second, because a more exact resemblance it was impossible to procure: therefore, giving every gem a slight brush, and one by one depositing them in the purposely reserved casket, from whence, a few hours before, she had purloined their valuable prototype, she rang for her woman—ordered a hackney

hackney-coach—huddled on her cloaths—drew a trick veil over her face—and, whilst her husband was outraging truth with one guardian, she as industriously set forward to commit an imposition on the other.

Being told by the girl who opened the door “that her master was *despard* bad, and that a *doctor* was sent for,” her ladyship insisted on going to his chamber, where she found him in a high fever, probably the fruits of a long night’s reflection on the imprudence of his having trusted her with the casket she now came to restore.

“Have you brought them back?” cried the sick man, eagerly, fixing his inflamed eyes on those of his ward, as she placed herself by the side of his bed on an iron chest, filled with money and securities—“Have you brought my jewels?”

“Here they *all* are safe and sound, my dear Sir,” presenting the agate gold-mounted repository which *should* have contained them, and which his burning trembling hands grasped at, as a hawk bounces on its prey.

“Thank you—thank you!” muttered he, lifting up the lid, “Yes, I see they are right
—very

—very right!—and I thank you with all my heart!”

“Where would you have me bestow them?” asked her ladyship; “for, alas! my good Mr. Bateman, I fear you are too ill to dispose of them with your own hands!”

“No, my child!” said he, I will not trouble you farther; they shall repose with me between the sheets till I get up, which will be very soon; for the sight of your Ladyship has done me so much good, that now, taking my leave, I shall lose no time in putting on my cloaths, and going myself to tell the apothecary I am recovered without his assistance, for I neither like to take *his* physic, or give him *my* money.—So good day!—good day!—I hope Miss Clarissa is well, and will soon get married to her noble admirer!”

“Not exactly to *him*,” replied her ladyship, with a smile of importance; “I came with your jewels thus early, to tell you that”——

“Any other time, my lady,” impatiently interrupting her intended communication, “he will be here presently if I do not stop him!—Any other time I shall be glad to see your
E ladyship,

ladyship, and to hear you talk upon the business."

Lady Isleworth, thus limited to time and silence, withdrew from the sick man's apartment, sufficiently satisfied at having left behind her what would have been his *death* instead of *cure*, had he suspected the imposition; but of that there was now no chance, well knowing he would lock up the casket with other similar treasures, in his iron chest, the moment she turned her back, where, subject to no re-examination of the contents, she was positive it would lie dormant till the *final* of what she could not but foresee must end in a very intricate adjustment.

The *present* moment was always that of her ladyship's care, and doatage ever provided for to her very best abilities; but she treated the *future* with the same negligence bestowed on the younger branches of her family, that is, she made no provision for either.

Bateman might live many years, at least she saw no danger from his immediate indisposition; it was only *his* death, and the consequence of her private affairs falling into other hands, that could possibly distress her.

Even

Even against this evil, fortune might yet befriend her in providing expedients; she *may*, by a few lucky faros, prevent the practised imposition from being brought to light, by a timely exchange of the true for the false jewels;—Sir Frederick *may* die—or the word *may* come to an end.

C H A P. XI.

COMMON OCCURRENCES.

REGULARITY being no distinguishing feature in the domestic arrangements of her ladyship's family, she was not surprised at her return home, to find the principal members all dispersed, some one way, some another—breakfast, untouched, still on the table, and no body to open the door or answer questions but her own woman.

With her she immediately proceeded to the dressing-room, where, having paid all devotional attention to her personal adornment, she

gave Harris directions to pack up certain of her worn-out dresses, and send them to Mrs. Trotter, to whom she addressed the following lines, whilst the dissatisfied Abigail was obeying her commands with the most grudging reluctance.

“ Mrs. Trotter,

“ I think it very strange that Arabella and
 “ Matilda should be in the condition you represent, when you know I put them so well
 “ cloathed, so much like children of the *first*
 “ fashion, under your tuition! There must
 “ have been *some* monstrous mismanagement,
 “ but *where*, I have not leisure just now to examine!

“ It is impossible Sir Frederick should be
 “ able to maintain *all* his family in luxuries;
 “ for at this time he has an establishment to form
 “ for their eldest brother, who, having made
 “ the most *fortunate* alliance with a young lady of
 “ *quality*, our whole attention would be entirely
 “ fixed on him, if it was not that we are
 “ equally bound to provide for Miss Isleworth
 “ such an appearance as is suitable to her prospects in marriage, which are infinitely more
 “ brilliant than even those of our son Arthur!

“ As

" As to the two little ones, we do not pro-
 " vide from them half so well as for those un-
 " der your care—they have only a nursery-
 " maid, and are kept at very little expence *as*
 " *to cloaths*; yet I hear no complaints that
 " any thing *wears out*, or that they *out-grow*
 " any thing. Miss Isleworth sometimes hears
 " them their lessons; but, when she is lifted
 " to a very conspicuous rank in the peerage *that*
 " will be over; nor can my *own* woman attend
 " to them *then* as she does *now*, my business
 " being sufficient to find her employment: for
 " which reasons, when I recall Arabella
 " and Matilda, I shall send you Diana and
 " Stella.

" In the mean time, you will turn what I
 " convey from my own wardrobe to the best
 " possible dresses for the young ladies. As to
 " shoes, stockings, and such like plebeian con-
 " siderations.—I am at a loss to give direc-
 " tions.—I suppose there are shoe-makers and
 " stocking-wavers in every little pretty village,
 " where, if you cannot fit them, they must go
 " without.—People of condition are the last in
 " the world to know any thing of these mat-
 " ters!

" Sir

“ Sir Frederick will send you a bill as soon
 “ as our own affairs are settled; but I am
 “ sorry to hear your parson is so poor as to
 “ require *our* assistance. I know the general
 “ cry is about the dearness of provisions - for
 “ my part I know no difference. Mutton, at
 “ a parson’s table, is mighty wholesome food—
 “ and mutton, I *am* sure, must be *remarkably*
 “ cheap, for I saw many hundred sheep as I
 “ went out to air the other morning - indeed
 “ the road was quite full of them.

“ Your apprehensions as to the girls form-
 “ ing improper connections may be prudent,
 “ yet they are perfectly ridiculous. Upon my
 “ word, good woman, you might as well have
 “ supposed *Lady Isleworth* would enter into an
 “ amour with *your* husband, as that *Lady Isle-*
 “ *worth’s* daughters should bend their exalted
 “ rank in society to a level with any thing so
 “ pitiful as the son of a dirty farmer, or the
 “ clerk of your village attorney. I laugh at
 “ your folly, but desire it may not be repeat-
 “ ed.

“ Tell Isabella I am much pleased with
 “ her letter, but have not leisure to an-
 “ swer it. When I order them to town,
 “ you may depend on my sending *Diana* and
 “ *Stela*

“ *Stella* to fill up the vacancy their absence
“ will make in your household, with exactly
“ the *same* stipend as we have given you with the
“ other two.——Love to the girls!—I take
“ all that you have written concerning them in
“ good part, notwithstanding your absurd con-
“ jectures, and remain your friend,

“ C. ISLEWORTH.”

It may be necessary for the editor to observe, that of the six younger children entailed upon the house of Isleworth at the time when *Clarissa* was taken home, only three survived!—Heaven, in mercy, took the other three to itself! *Diana* seven, and *Stella* six years old, one might have said, were *born out of season*, supposing any time or season to have been marked by the finger of prudence on the calendar of their improvident parents; but, as it was, one season was quite as good as another.

Lady *Isleworth* had but just finished and sealed her dispatches to Mrs. Trotter, when Lady Ann rushed into her apartment, exclaiming, with an air of consummate levity, “Where do you think I have been this morning?”

"I cannot guess," replied her ladyship.

"Then, my *pretty mama*, I *must* tell you!—Oh, he is the most divine man in the world!"

"Do you mean Arthur?"

"Nothing is farther from my meaning! for, though he can *hear* and *speak*, he can do nothing else.—But the idol of my idolatry, though deaf and dumb, can look into futurity! and, oh dear! he has told me such wonderful things!"—

"I now comprehend you, my dear!—Have you really been to consult the conjur or, whose residence is so far off as the Old Bailey?"

"Yes, really and truly!"

"And unattended?"

"Totally unattended!"

Her ladyship, on this cross-examination, made a palpable mistake, having forgot that she had been escorted thither by Lord Clarence.

"I wish you should have entrusted me with the plan of your secret expedition," said the mother

her o f Arthur, " that I might have added another to -his levee ;— there is nothing I delight in so much as fortune-tellers ! But what did he say ?—you must tell me *that* at least !"

" Why, he said I should be *twice* a wife, without being *once* a widow !"

" Stop ! let me consider—that it is certainly not only very *probable* but very *necessary* ! for, as you were married to Arthur by a blacksmith, I have often thought it right that the ceremony should be performed again by a regular parson."

" Not for the universe !—the dear little fiery-faced Cyclops is *parson* enough for *my* occasions. If my next husband has more interest or more *money* than my *first*, I will try to promote this smutty-fingered agent of the church from his forge and his hammer, to the principal residence of the great-high priest at Lambeth !"

" However happy, my son cannot but feel himself for your *grateful* effusions towards the person who united him to your ladyship, he must translate the prediction of your dumb oracle as *I* do, or he will have no reason to be

satisfied—otherwise, how, in the name of wonder, can you be *twice* married, and not *once* a widow!”

“*Such things are!*” replied Lady Ann, laughing; “and whether Arthur is satisfied or dissatisfied, *I* believe in the man with *all* my heart, and the thing is certain!”

CHAP. XII.

FAMILIAR LECTURES ON THE FALLACY OF APPEARANCES.

“**D**ID you ask information concerning your father?” continued Lady Isleworth, in that question forgetting the terrible prognostic of her son’s disgrace.

“To be sure I did, my pretty mama!”

“Well, my dear, and what did he tell you?”

“Exactly

“ Exactly what I knew before—that he was as stubborn as a mule—as a voracious as a miser—as mischievous as a monkey—and as impenetrable as adamant!”

“ What, no hopes of a reconciliation!”

“ Not a glimmering of hope!—his lordship is to have a *male* heir, and I am to be cut off from the inheritance!”

“ What an unfortunate circumstance!”

“ Well, now, I declare it gives me no manner of uneasiness!—it is just in unison with my expectations!”

“ Oh, how I envy your never failing spirits!—Indeed you have little *reason* to be cast down. But, my dear Lady Ann, though riches are *no* object to the family you honour with your alliance, yet it would certainly please Sir Frederick to have seen you on *good terms* with Lord Benvour.”

“ That would be something extremely *novel*,” replied her ladyship; “ for, during his long life and my short one, we never have been on good terms. When I was a child, he concerned himself

himself as little about me, as, since the commencement of womanhood, I have troubled myself, to consult his fancies."

"Well, I do wish," repeated Lady Isleworth, after a pause, "you had told me where you was going this morning!—I have a hundred questions to ask about Clarissa, and I must see your deaf and dumb friend, *that* is positive!"

"About Clarissa!" retorted Lady Ann, "tell me what is it you want to know about Clarissa, and I will conduct you to him, either now, this evening, or to-morrow: disguised like servants, we may roll away in a hackney-coach—consult the old gentleman—return without being missed—and no body the wiser,—but, observe, I must know the secret before hand."

Lady Isleworth happened to be in possession of a secret which, since the last night, when she privately spoke a few words to Lord Clarence at her ball, had been nibbling its passage from her heart to her lips, and from thence would have reposed on the ear of Lady Ann, if, at the same moment, the entrance of a
page

sage person, denominated the house steward, had not impeded its progress.

“What are we to do, my Lady?” said this important purveyor of dismantled affluence; “here is another execution sent in, for repairs done at Shuttlecock Abbey!—the fellows have seized on every thing below, and would hardly give me time to acquaint your Ladyship that they are coming to your Ladyship’s dressing-room, to lay hands on your Ladyship’s jewels.”

“Let them come!” said her ladyship, with an indefinable smile of defiance—“You and I, my dear, will retire to another apartment,” speaking to Lady Ann; “it is a frightful thing that such wretches are permitted to disturb our tranquillity!”

Were it customary to depict the imps of satan under the form of youth and beauty, the malicious grin with which Lady Ann followed the stately steps of her mother-in-law to a distant chamber, might have entitled her to the honour of a sitting; and no sooner were they alone than the sportive mischief found a vent more unequivocal, and she said, stretching her fine figure at full length on the
sofa,

sofa, which, by a few steps, she reached before Lady Isleworth—

“ My pretty mama, pray solve me this riddle — How can there be such abundance of riches where there are such an abundance of executions? — *one* yesterday, *one* to-day, and to-morrow perhaps they *may* come in couples!”

Lady Isleworth looked a little grave, drew up her head, and declared she did not quite comprehend her ladyship’s meaning.

“ Why, my dear Madam,” continued Lady Ann, with ill-natured archness, “ did you not tell me, a few minutes ago, that *riches* were *no* object to Sir Frederick? and yet, by what has appeared, he seems sometimes to be incommoded by a want of them!”

“ *Appearances* and *seemings* are never to be trusted,” said her ladyship: “ your error is natural enough—it is also pardonable—as being the first instance you have given me of inexperience, which a greater knowledge of the world, when I have established you in a house of your own, must wear away off itself;—you will *then* understand that people of rank are the originals of perfect economy. It is not our system, Lady
Ann,

Ann, to display our riches before the eyes of dependent wretches; we only force the *canaille* to exact payment, because we wish they should *think* us poor, and because we wish to be talked of like *other* people of rank, whose greatest consequence, undoubtedly, proceeds from the style of affluence they are able to support. If it were not for our debts, pray, can you inform me how it would be possible to decide for the palm of victory where there are so many splendid competitors?"

"Oh dear!—yes;—if I were umpire I would give it to the *greatest* squanderer, upon *proof*!"

"Well, my dear, and there is no other way of ascertaining such evidence on *proof*, except by the number and magnitude of the debts we contract.—One thousand pounds on our tradesmen's books, as you will find hereafter, goes farther in building a reputation for expence, than ten thousand disbursed by the vulgar rule of laying them down on every paltry occasion. What one *owes*, remains to shew *how* one has lived—what is spent, nobody remembers!"

"Then,

“ Then, my pretty mama,” cried the gay pupil of this modern philosophy, laughing without restraint, “ if I am to measure the intrinsic value of the family to which I am admitted an honorary member, by the number of their book-debts, I am sure Arthur’s *papa* must be even richer than my *own* ! and if Sir Frederick would but take the trouble of explaining this delightful mystery, it may not be *too* late to open his lordship’s eyes to the *prudence* of my hasty alliance with the splendid house of Isleworth. — Suppose you make him try the experiment ? If he will *not* do this, how is Lord Benvour to be undeceived ? — when I myself, but for your Ladyship’s communications, should ever have continued in the error of believing, that *great* debts and *great* poverty are inseparable companions.”

“ Nobody,” thundered out Sir Frederick as *sans* ceremony he broke in upon the interesting *tête-à-tête*, “ nobody, Madam, in this house, shall presume to talk of *my* debts and *my* poverty ! — d — n if they shall !”

Lady Ann only smiled in his face, curtsying with an air of profound ridicule, retired from his enraged presence.

Lady Isleworth began to upbraid the incivility of his address on all occasions, as well as on the present, to the most *charming* of women; but her reproaches were interrupted by this short question—

“ Have you any money ? ”

“ *Me* money ! how could such an idea enter your head, Sir Frederick ? ”

“ Because last night I saw you punting, with half a peck of gold before you ! ”

“ Well, Sir, had it been a peck, or a bushel, it would have gone exactly the same way.—I am no more answerable for the caprices of fortune than for the cruelty of our conduct to the daughter of Lord Benvour, who, but for *my* indulgence, would find a mighty comfortable home under *your* roof ! ”

Stamping his feet on the floor, he vehemently swore, “ that if she persisted in naming that eternal jilt, he would ”——

“ What would you do ? ” she replied.—
“ Arthur *is* married, and the *wife* of Arthur you should learn to respect.”

“ No, —

“No, by G—! I will never respect her!” he cried; “she has ruined Arthur!—she did not bring him a shilling!—but, under *your* tutorage, would squander millions!—A dog! *he* deserves his *fate*!—But poor Clarissa! it is d—d hard her prospects should be blasted by the coquetry of her flirting ladyship!

“Really I do not understand you, Sir Frederick!”

“Curfed stupidity! You pretend not to know, that to the arts of your brimstone daughter-in-law we owe the *desertion* of Lord Clarence!”

“From any such monstrous imputations I acquit Lady Ann,” said the wife of his bosom; “*she* is perfectly innocent of what *you* call Lord Clarence’s *desertion*,, but which *I*,” raising her voice to an extraordinary pitch,” “denominate the most disinterested friendship!”

“I hate such stuff!—such canting!—such d—d nonsense! Tell me, if you can, whether *friendship* or *honour* made him renounce our alliance so publicly last night? I am inclined to blow his brains out, for exhibiting me as the *butt* of
of

of ridicule to a set of starving, twittering, dancing devils !”

“ Moderate your transports, Sir Frederick, or positively I am silent.” This threat being uttered with such a simpering joy-illuminated countenance, gained some portion of his attention, and he emphatically demanded, “ whether *she* had any private reasons by which *she* could exculpate Clarissa’s lover from the charge of unfaithfulness? We all know,” said he, “ that you spoke apart to him, and perhaps he explained himself to *your* satisfaction !”

“ Infinitely to my satisfaction !”

“ Then, by G—, he must fulfil his engagements !”

“ He means to do us, Sir Frederick, a much greater honour than to fulfil them in his *own* person! Lord Clarence’s motive for not marrying your daughter, doating on her, as he does, to distraction, is noble, disinterested, and pathetic !”

C H A P. XIII.

HOW HE CAME THERE.

PRIOR to the baronet's intrusion on his wife's privacy, and to the total demolition of a very edifying conversation, he was informed by his domestics, that the troublesome visitors who, the preceding day, had been expelled the house, were returned on a similar errand ; but this intelligence no farther discomposed the harmony to which his disposition was attuned by half an hour's lounge in ——street, whilst Captain Snug was dreaming of preferment, than merely to make him curse all brickmakers, masons, painters, and carpenters, but most of all the crazy old abbey, on which, fifteen years ago, he contracted a debt of fifteen hundred pounds ; and to those rascally artificers he had given his bond, who, after asking fifteen hundred times for their money, audaciously and hostilely entered the town premises, having heard of
the

the good success attending the first execution.

Sir Frederick examined the contents of his pocket-book, where he found enough to send away the executioners, except thirty pounds; and without knowing how it was possible his wife should have such a sum in her possession, he determined at all events to make the demand; but, stopping at the door of her apartment, where his ear caught the words *debt* and *poverty*, as pronounced by Lady Ann, his placidity gave way to passion of the most outrageous description, and drove her ladyship from the field, vowing to revenge herself on the whole race of Hleworths.

How to get rid of the unbidden guest who had superceded him in the mastership of his own goods and chattels, or rather, how to raise the deficient thirty pounds, mingled with the curiosity of Sir Frederick such a portion of bewildering cogitations (for *thought* it certainly was not), that instead of listening to his lady's panegyric on Lord Clarence, he bad her first produce her purse, where, finding only ten guineas, she having, by flight of hand, dexteriously released ten times ten in managing the sliders, as she reluctantly drew it from her pocket, he farther required that she should borrow,
from

from among her servants, the other nineteen pounds ten shillings, and without swearing one oath, declared upon his honour, he would put a thousand pounds into her hands the following day.

There happened to be so much good logic in this last argument, that, without contending, she flew to execute his commands; but, being aware, that where nothing is *paid* nothing can be *saved*, without referring to her domestics, she returned in ten minutes, and delivered the exact sum into the open palm of Sir Frederick, who said, as it closed upon the prize—

“This is the effect of your extravagance, Madam! However I may want money, your *servants* have enough of it!—Their wages are *too great*!—reduce them one half—and I’ll be d—d, even *then*, if they are not able, at the end of the year, to count guineas with their master!”

“Go!” said her ladyship, as he left the room, to get rid of the leeches which pestered him—
“Go, and let me hear no more of these despicable wretches!”

Whether,

Whether, by *despicable* wretches she meant her *duns* or her *domestics*, has never been rightly understood; but, having, dispatched the former, Sir Frederick came back in haste, to enquire upon what grounds she formed an opinion so favourable to the intentions of Lord Clarence.

“ If he is not to marry Clarissa,” he, “ for which of his good qualities is it that you just now called him *noble* and *disinterested* ?”

“ Because,” replied her ladyship, “ he is willing to sacrifice his own tender feelings to the excrucive agonies of a less fortunate friend.”

“ What ? the fellow would make love by appointing a substitute, I suppose !”

“ And if the substitute happened to be of a superior rank, superior fortune, superior every thing, where could possibly be your objection ? — For instance, you very naturally desire to see your daughter a countess, *and* would it not be still better if you could see her a dutchess ?”

“ Oh,

“Are you mad?” exclaimed the baronet.

“Oh, how pathetic is the duke’s situation!” she continued, without endeavouring to clear herself from the charge of insanity,

—————“He never told his love,
“But let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud,
“Feed”—————

“On the devil!” roared out Sir Fredrick.
—“Tell me, without all this d—d palavering, what Clarence has been saying to you?—what Duke has turned your brain?—and what”——

“Your passions so tumultuous,” interrupted Lady Illeworth, in her turn, “as—witness—your conduct to that sweet dear creature Lady Ann, whom you so falsely accuse of having ruined Arthur, and destroyed the prospects of Clarissa—that unless you promise an additional thousand to-morrow for *her* accommodation, and to fix her *ultimate* establishment, you shall hear no more of his Grace. *or* of his Grace’s intentions.”

“Prove the *fact*!—If it be worth a thousand pounds our odds are even—you shall have *two* thousand, or you shall have nothing!”

“You

“ You are a perfect Jew in your dealings,” said she; “ but I take your bett—and now listen!”

“ When Lord Clarence drew me aside from the company, he declared, in the most delicate, but distressing confusion, that to preserve the life of his friend, the Duke of Bilberry, and with a view to Miss Idleworth’s greater advancement he must forego his own happiness!

“ His Grace,” he said, “ hearing the report of his approaching marriage with Clarissa, had honoured him with a visit that very evening, which detained him until so late an hour from my party, torn,” as he sadly said, “ between the agitating extremes of being miserable himself, or occasioning the death of another, the poor duke having sworn to become his own executioner, if”——

“ This would be a d-d lucky stroke indeed!” cried the baronet, interrupting his lady, between whom there seemed to have been divided, in exact proportion, from their first setting out in life, all the riches of credulity with which their patron *Folly* could endow them, from her store-house of day-dreams.—

“ The devil fetch me,” continued Sir Frederick, if I did not always think his Grace had a

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particular

particular look towards my house whenever he passed it in his *tandam* !—so now the murder is out !”

“ Remember,” said the fair partner of his exultation, “ *whom* you are to thank for this good fortune : if I had not last summer, taken Clarissa to see Bilberry-castle, and to throw her in the way of the duke when I knew he was at home, this thing never could have happened.”

Sir Frederick, bursting into a loud laugh, reminded her ladyship, that, though at home, the duke did not shew himself.

“ But he permitted us to walk over the house,” she replied, “ and actually fell in love with Clarissa, by following her foot-steps unobserved.”

“ Who told you so ?”

“ Lord Clarence has declared it .”

“ Clarence has shewn himself an honest fellow !—What he says *may* be true, otherwise I should have thought *my* weight in parliament to have been the more ostensible foundation of this sudden love affair. When does he mean to
make

make his *own* propofals? To-morrow, by G—! I muft vifit my borough, and fhould be glad we underftood each other, that I may know *haroke* from *buzzurd* before I meet my constituents!"

Lady Ann, at this critical moment, foftly opening the door, juft fhewed her fmiling face within it, and for once, as ſhe expected, was not encountered by a frown from the brow of Arthur's papa, who, in his prefent ecftacy, might not even have difcovered her attempt at an *entré* fo *mal-à-propos*, if her pretty *mamma* had not exclaimed—

"Leave us, for a moment, my dear creature!—the inftant I have finifhed with Sir Frederick I will come to you."

Lady Ann's intrufion having no other end for its motive than to fee, at one glance, how her plans were advancing, retired, in full poffeffion of the ultimatum of her impatient wifhes. "Fools!" ſaid ſhe in a whifper, "how delightfully I have ſent you hunting after impoffibilities!"

"When," repeated Sir Frederick, "will the duke ſpeak ſpeak out?"

“ Not till you are gazetted, my dear ! ”

“ Upon my soul, then,” he replied, “ the time is not far off !—for, d—n me ! if between yourself, your son, and your daughter-in-law, I do not every day expect to see my name there in the list of bankrupts ! ”

Full of ridiculous grimace, between levity and displeasure, she congratulated him on the glory of his prospects, by the title of his Lordship.—“ In politeness to the ladies of your family,” said she, “ you are already a bankrupt, which will very ill accord with your growing nobility !—I know of no other poverty but what arises out of your own ideas.—The Duke of Bilberry is all goodness !—he will first get you created, and, on the same day, demand the hand of your fortunate daughter.”——She was interrupted by the credulous baronet, swearing, if such were his grace’s intentions, he had better marry first, and he would wait for the peerage.—“ You will certainly go in with the next *batch*, my dear ;—but the duke is proudly determined to secure your gratitude, before he solicits your alliance. Lord Clarence felt that his *own* conduct required explanation, therefore trusted me with this grand secret.—The duke must never be told that his friend betrays his confi-

confidence! Mean time, you have only to fix after which of you estates you will be named in the *patent*, and Clarence says he will propose it, as from himself, to the duke, who, when they are alone, can be brought to speak on no other subject than the *beautiful* Clarissa and her *elegant* family."

Monstrous collection of absurdities!—Love so little selfish as *that* relinquished by Lord Clarence in favour of a rival!—Love so violent, yet so rapidly patient as the Duke of Bilberry's!—honours so unsought!—caution so unnecessary!—What an heterogeneous mixture of incongruous ingredients for *fools* to feed on! Sir Frederick, as complete a dupe as his lady, found no difficulty in chusing his title, and her ladyship declared *Baron Shuttlecock* would sound vastly novel!—Shuttlecock Abbey was the entailment on their son Arthur, which, from its newly repaired condition, seemed likely to give a permanent support to many future barons, and was indeed the only one from whence Sir Fredrick could properly derive his honours, all other of the *Isleworth* estates being either *gone* or *going*.

CHAP. XIV.

SPEAKETH FOR ITSELF.

WHATEVER Nature does for her children she works with the judgment of an artist; she gives them the brilliant gem of beauty in the most simple settings—endows them with mental graces, shrouded in the veil of humility; and Clarissa Illeworth she had delighted to form after her most exquisite model of person and *mind*, perhaps to compensate for the caprice with which she destined her to make her *debut* under the care of parents who had no care for themselves. Many of her choicest talents, cultured by the early indefatigable labour of strangers, were still retained—others she had forfeited! And who will expect a daughter of Lady Illeworth, after so many years passed in her dissipated circles, to be *all* perfect? What she had retained uncontaminated by example, was a modest demeanour—simplicity of taste—humility of heart—sweetness of disposition—general philanthropy—and the most *hearty* affection, wherever nature, gratitude, or

her

her own fancy directed.—What then could she have forfeited?—The bloom of health—the sparkling vivacity of constitutional spirits—the composure of a contented mind—the self-approbation which nestles in the bosom of unblemished rectitude—the art of reflection—and the *practice*, though not the substance of piety.

Agitated almost to frenzy for the fate of her imprudent parents, when she cast them and herself on the mercy of her early protector, Clarissa could see nothing but felicity, or be sensible to any emotion but transport, at the unhopèd for success of her application. The first day of her emancipation from the toils of of pleasurable pursuits, which she had exchanged for the more rational enjoyment of domestic comforts, appeared, through the medium of vivifying gratitude, by far the most happy of her existence, and for more than a week she continued in the same opinion.

Amongst the chief blessings of her present situation, she did not fail to number her long desired release from the loathed addresses of her noble admirer, particularly hateful on the score of a prior attachment.

To the man, of all others, where concealment on her part became criminal, she would have confessed the unsanctioned engagements which love unchecked, passions uncontrouled, had blindly hurried her to contract, but was deterred from pursuing the exact line of truth by the apprehensive, rather than angry countenance of her friend; when first she named Percival Bate-man to Mr. Curry, her candor failed, and she struck into the path of duplicity; acknowledged a preference, but concealed that her lover had, unknown to his father, taken a voyage from Hamburgh, to indulge himself with one interview, to receive her vows, and pledge his own of everlasting constancy.

Prior to the moment when, it might be remembered, Clarissa ran in such haste to fetch the smelling bottle which was not wanted, nor even thought of after her escape from observation, she had fully determined, if possible, to procure Mr. Curry's assent to allow *one* interview, contrary to the prohibition of her mother.

Her letter on this occasion, has already appeared in the eighteenth chapter, and will afford, by its contents, strong presumptive proof, that had he then been indulgent to her wishes, all reserve would have vanished—he would have
possessed

possessed the secret ; but he would have possessed it too late !—the fatal engagement was already made !—Clarissa did not desire it should be ever disannulled ! But, feeling that she had done amiss, she sighed for absolution from her father by adoption, being in despair of obtaining it from her natural parents ; poor as they were, she knew their pride would never have submitted, even if old Bateman, instead of opposing, had solicited their alliance ; but, to combat both with pride and avarice in the extreme, our young people thought a too arduous undertaking ; for which reason, in binding themselves to a *future* union, they consulted only their own inclinations.

Here then evaporated the only two opportunities which had seemed to present themselves for the developement of that mysterious secret, so wearing to the conscience of Clarissa. In the first attempt it was not her fault, but owing to the stern honour of him to whom she would have confided it, that her intentions were defeated ;—yet what shall be said of the second ? only, that having forsaken the right road of candor, she could no more return to it, false shame having closed up all its avenues.

Superfluous would be the voice of an angel, who should call upon the young, the gay, the inexperienced, to turn back from the errors of dissingenuousness; what then would avail wise lectures from the pen of a time-worn mortal. The example of good mothers *may*, if human means *can* do it, effect a reform; but against the example of bad ones, to bring an host of arguments into the field, would be waging war without the hope of a victory.

Novelty of situation—the vivacity of expectation, yet unknowing *what* to expect, on the daily return of her benefactor from the grand mart of intelligence—the entertaining conversation of Mrs. St. Edmonds—and, above all, the leisure which retirement afforded for *tender* meditation, during the first week of her seclusion, left no faculty in the mind of Clarissa by which satiety could enter.

“ Oh, how charming !” would she exclaim, pressing the hand of Mrs. St. Edmonds, “ how enchanting, is the solitude of this earthly paradise !—May I always live in the presence of those guardian angels who conducted me hither !”

Did Clarissa speak as she thought?—
 Certainly she spoke as she *then* thought,
 But that female who can answer for what
 her thoughts *may* be, is only the creature
 of imagination, a *rara-avis*, which exists no
 where but in the brain of lovers and poets.

Having left town on the Monday, Sunday
 kept at a decent distance—but it arrived at
 last; and Clarissa attended her affectionate
 protectors to the parish church, where, with
 the purity of angels, she *might*, and *wished* to
 have lifted up her soul to the presiding Deity;
 but being unversed in any other form than
 those of a royal drawing-room, she found her-
 self strangely puzzled for suitable answers in
 the court of her God.

Turning to Mrs. St. Edmonds, after confusedly searching for the proper psalms from the
 first to the last page in the prayer-book, put
 into her hand by that good lady, required her
 assistance, with a blush of shame so conscious,
 yet so beautiful, as must have convinced a less
 prejudiced observer, that in her ignorance
 there was no mixture of impiety, and that
 her mind was devout, although her manners
 were uninformed.

CHAP. XV.

“AND TEACH THE YOUNG IDEA HOW TO
SHOOT.”

THE motto of our chapter became really the task of Mrs. St. Edmonds; for though her pupil had attained almost the stage of womanhood, she knew as little of domestic economy as of devotional practice, and as little of either as the new born infant knows of philosophy.

Both Mr. Curry and his sister possessed the happy art of conveying instruction, without making the object of their tuition too feelingly alive to her own deficiencies. Another Sunday passed, and brought no difficulties to Clarissa.—She returned from church self-satisfied, and able to meet the eyes of her paternal friends, emitting rays of approbation, uncrushed by the mortifying recollection that her conduct had been particularly marked by folly or ignorance.

Still

Still Clarissa was the daughter of her mother, and, as such, in part the slave of *her* habits. Sundays had ever been deemed by Lady Isleworth, as well as her fashionable associates, as fit for no other earthly purpose than to hold concerts and play at faro.

It must not therefore be thought unnatural, or even reprehensible, the force of example being rightly considered, that Clarissa should feel the first and second Sabbath she had ever assisted to keep holy since her girlish days, rather long and tedious, especially the hours of visiting, drives to Hyde park and evening company.—She looked in vain from the windows for coronet coaches—she could only see from thence sober citizens, breathing the wholesome air in taxed-carts; she listened for the footman's thundering rap, but could hear only the village bell, which summoned her to the repetition of her morning duties, never omitted by the family with whom she now resided, and in due time they all became extremely dear to Clarissa.

Notwithstanding the sweet complying disposition of their beloved young guest, the penetration of Mrs. St. Edmonds soon discovered, that the smiling veil of cheerfulness worn by Clarissa, was less the manufactory of the heart

heart than the labour of disguise. She made this observation to her brother, who heartily joined with her in devising variety of scenes, to make her abandonment of those vitiating ones to which she had so long been accustomed, less sudden, and of course more supportable.

“ When the spring is a little advanced,” said the merchant, “ we will take her to Bath; and afterwards, if she prefers a fashionable watering place to this solitude, she shall be indulged.”

“ Ah!” replied Mrs. St. Edmonds, “ will not so much of it be rescuing the poor child from one danger, and plunging her into another?”

“ No, Elizabeth!” he answered, no damage can ensue, either to her mind or reputation, under your respectable patronage! It is not the enjoyment of innocent pleasures that contaminates, it is a misuse of them, by which they are rendered pernicious. It is perilous, it is almost certain destruction, for the younger part of your sex to suck dissipation from the same fountain with Lady Isleworth; but, to sip it on the flowery margin of the streamlet,
under

under the guidance of a prudent friend, truly maternal, to such an arrangement there can be no possible objection."

Mrs. St. Edmonds was not one of those independent females from whose judgment there is no appeal, but, like her namesake, the *great* Elizabeth of England, her sterling wisdom shone the brighter for having submitted it to the direction of others, whom, daily experience told her, were still wiser than herself—of course the merchant had every thing his own way.

Accordingly, it was also agreed, that their beautiful charge should remain ignorant of the excursions they had planned for her sake, till the return of Sir Frederick from the country; because, though Mr. Curry had purchased the rights of a *nominal*, he was too delicate to interfere with the authority of a *natural* parent, as long as no sacrifice should be required inimical to the happiness or honour of his adopted ward; he therefore enforced silence, that she might escape the mortification of disappointment, if Sir Frederick should happen to oppose his intentions.

Shortly subsequent to the above conversation, or rather abridgement of their very interesting consultations,

consultations, Mrs. St. Edmonds being confined to the house, by symptoms of a very painful disorder, to which she was unfortunately subject, desired Clarissa would use her carriage, to explore some pleasant drives to which she had not yet conducted her in person; but, had all the pleasures of the world been just then offered to the grateful girl, she would have renounced them without hesitation, for the satisfaction of administering to the ease or amusement of her kind benefactress.

“ Ah, Madam !” replied Clarissa, “ if you send me from you, when my attentions may be serviceable, I shall think you do not love me, or that you are incommoded by my officiousness !”

“ Neither, my dear girl !” said Mrs. St. Edmonds, “ you are near my heart, and I would always have you near my person, if I could gratify my wishes at any less expence than the risk of your own health.”

“ Then,” cried Clarissa, “ you will not command me to leave you, for to your society I owe the restoration of my health, and it is only being banished from you that can impair it.”

Here

Here dropped the contest: and never did Miss Isleworth exert her powers of pleasing with more ardour, or to better effect, than for the amusement of her maternal friend during eight days that her confinement lasted.

More than ever endeared both to the merchant and his sister, no sooner was the latter recovered than they turned their whole attention to the investigation of the secret sadness which, with all her efforts, Clarissa could not entirely disguise from the lynx-eye of their affectionate solicitude.—They only waited to receive the clue from herself to remove her uneasiness, if that were possible, nor waited long for the opportunity they anxiously courted.

Having breakfasted together, previous to Mr. Curry's daily peregrinations from Enfield to London, from London to Enfield, Clarissa observed, that she could not account for her mother's silence—"I have not had one line from her," said she, "though I have been absent more than three weeks—I wonder what they are about, that they thus seem to have all forgotten me?"

The hint was seized on with avidity. — Her guardian offered to take her with him to town.—

Mrs.

Mrs. St. Edmonds said she would accompany them—and Clarissa accepted this new proof of their goodness with a sort of rapture, which it was impossible to mistake for any other sentiment but the real one—filial affection towards a parent, who very little deserved to inspire it.

“ You shall make a short visit,” said the merchant, “ to Lady Isleworth—my sister will wait for you at my counting-house, where I can treat you with a sandwich, which will enable us to return home to a late dinner.”

Clarissa’s heart danced, and her eyes sparkled—she kissed the hands of the indulgent pair, who had thus considerately catered for her satisfaction. The chaise which was to have conveyed it master to town, was exchanged for Mrs. St. Edmonds’s coach, in which they set out, in such harmony of spirits, as are more frequently experienced by those who have something to think of and something to do, than by the unreflecting, the idle, or the dissipated.

C H A P. XVI.

THE ALARM.

HITHERTO, I believe, it has never been allowed, that the servant of a citizen can ever arrive at the all-perfect knock at a great man's door, for which the domestics of great men at the west end of the town have been distinguished time immemorial.

Whoever has fallen into this error would have retracted, could they have heard the thundering which announced Miss Isleworth at the door of her mother, sounding in her ears so much like the annunciation of a duke or a dutchess, that it threw her into a terrible state of confusion, arising from the situation in which she happened just then to be placed, and would certainly have pulled the bell to say she was *not at home*, if the hope, however likely that this important visit might be the duke of Bilberry, to lay at her feet the patent of her husband's

band's nobility, had not for a moment restrained her.

In that moment of hesitation Clarissa rushed in at the door - flew though all sorts of glittering impediments strewed on the floor—and, unmindful of the herd of trades-people by whom her ladyship was encircled, gave utterance to the liveliest effusions of joy and tenderness.

“ I am glad to see you my dear, and I am glad to see you looking *so* handsome,” said Lady Isleworth, “ but just now I am extremely busy, so do *not* interrupt me.”

“ Mr.——” she continued, as if it was of no consequence to name the man honoured by her commands, “ Lady Ann says she will keep the ear-rings and neck-lace, though she thinks the ear-rings paultry—very paultry !”

“ But the price, my Lady !”

“ Oh, I have asked nothing about the price !—something extremely low, I suppose ?”

“ Extremely low indeed, my Lady !—the whole amount of these articles is only fifteen hundred guineas !—three thousand would have
paid

paid for them, if the markets had not fallen, through the quantities imported by the French bility."

"Yes, they are certainly cheap—so that is all at present: only remember the chain and bracelets are sent home Thursday se'en-night, and not later than one o'clock:—remember also, that the chain is to be lengthened three yards, and four rings added to the bracelets—in their present state Lady Ann cannot endure them."

The notable matron now waved her hand, as much as to say—"You are dismissed." But, before he went out of the room, the jeweller put to her the simple question of—"To whose account, my Lady, are the articles to be placed?"

"Sir Frederick Isleworth's!" she replied, with a nod, and immediately the jeweller disappeared.

Another claimant to her attention was about to succeed him, when Clarissa, impatient to hear some tidings of her father, ventured on an act of disobedience, by asking how he did, and when her mother last heard from him?

“ He is very well *now* !” was the answer, turning over several cards of rich points, without bestowing a single glance towards the fair querist, on whose countenance she would have seen a certain expression of horror, displayed in crimson characters, the glowing fruits of her own persisting in the usual routine of extravagance, which had already so nearly and so lately conducted them to the very gates of destruction.

Clarissa could not behold this ruining system unagitated ; yet her flushed cheeks alone betrayed the emotions of her thoughts—her lips durst not disclose them—she might silently condemn, but she would not reproach her mother.

Alarmed at her ladyship’s short reply, “ that her father was very well *now*,” Clarissa again demanded, “ if he had been ill since he left town ?”

Finding it impossible to get rid of her importunities, Lady Isleworth said, in a peevish tone, “ My God child, why *will* you torment me, till I have sent away those people !”

“ Dear

“ Dear mama, do not be angry !—only tell me what you meant, when you said papa was very well *now* ?—tell me this, and I will not interrupt you again !”——Clarissa, as she spoke, had seized one of her mother’s hands, and her sweet eyes employed for the favour of an answer still more eloquently than her tongue.

Lady Isleworth, with a dozen hands, would have found employment for them all, in tumbling over the mountains of finery within her reach, therefore could not afford one out of two to the embrace of her daughter, but said, as she withdrew it—

“ Shall I repeat to you a thousand times, Sir Frederick is very well *now* ?——Mrs. Modren, let Lady Ann’s linen be trimmed with this point—it is an absolute darling !” —Then turning again to Clarissa —“ You know how madly he rides—his horse threw him the first day of his journey, and put out his collar-bone ; but he is *now* quite as well as I wish him !”

“ Oh !” cried the gentle girl, with a tear and a sigh, “ what a dreadful accident !—but, thank God my dear father is now well —it must be so, because mama says he is *as* well as *she* wishes !”

This

This little ejaculation was uttered so softly that it reached only the ear of her mother, who, with a smile (not of approbation), whispered in her turn—"Don't make yourself a fool, child, by adopting the cant of the Methodist people you live with!"

Clarissa could scarcely restrain her displeasure at this liberal, as well as unfounded sarcasm; but still respect kept her silent, and she spoke no more till the whole multitude of money-suckers were all dismissed, with as many different orders, every one in the way of his business, as Sir Frederick's estates, had they been clear of incumbrances, would not have paid for under a less price than at least one year's moiety.

"Now, Miss Isleworth," said her ladyship, throwing herself at full length on a sofa, "whilst I am enjoying a little respite from fatigue, let me hear *your* adventures, and how you have continued to exist so long out of the world."

"Dear mama, what adventurers can I have to relate!—Yet, from my very heart, I am able to assure you, that I have been extremely happy in the society of Mrs. St. Edmonds and her

her generous brother, to whom we are all so greatly indebted."

"Listen to me, Clarissa!—About these mercantile people I will not be disturbed!—you may be civil to them now, but hereafter I must have you understand your *own* consequence!"

"What consequence, mama?"

"That is a mystery!—But when time shall develope it, no such names as your *Mistress* St. Edmonds, or your Mister *Anybodies*, can certainly obtrude upon your visiting-books."

Clarissa's reply will be found in the next chapter.

C H A P. XVII.

SHORT AND PITHY.

LOOKING at her mother with a doubtful expression, whether she was to consider her in or out of her senses, "Mama," said she, "I do not comprehend your meaning!"

6

"Impossible,

“Impossible, child, that you should altogether understand it! for I have often remarked you are wonderfully remiss in the accurate science of penetration. However, enough has been said at present—the future will explain itself!—Meantime I shall manage in the best possible manner for your interest, and I hope, my dear, you are fully confirmed in the opinion that it cannot be *better* conducted!”

Before the still unconvinced girl as to the state of her mother’s intellect, could, at the expence of truth, pay the demands made on her veracity, the entrance of Arthur suddenly put to death a *tête-à-tête*, already lengthened beyond the time when Clarissa knew she should be expected in Broad-street;—but, to leave the room just as her brother entered it, would have wounded her sensibility—she therefore rose to receive his salute with animated and sisterly affection.

Arthur’s appearance was not remarkably appropriate to his many distinctions, such as—husband to a gay lady of quality—*certain* heir to a baronet—*uncertain* inheritance of a coronet, or even to the respectability of a gentleman.

Whilst receiving the offered kiss from the lips of his sister, shaking her roughly by the hand, testifying

tellifying his pleasure at seeing her, with many unmeaning oaths, habitually used by the son as well as the father, enquiring if she had been kicking up a row amongst the old country quizes, and supposing, with a sort of wit peculiar to himself, that they had sent her home by a parish pass—all this time his mother did not cease to survey him with indescribable vexation, and at last exclaimed—

“Patience support me! what a figure!”

The figure he made in the eyes of Lady Isleworth is not unworthy stricture from the pen of an author:—His tall immense person was covered from the throat to the heels with a long flannel dressing-gown, not of immaculate whiteness—his hair was uncombed—his beard unshaven—his face unwashed—and, to compleat the *tout ensemble*, two crimson garters hung suspended from his neck, instead of occupying their destined post round his knees.

“My God!” again repeated his delicate mother, “why will you insult my patience by coming to me in this gothic derangement!”

“Because,” he replied, “there is no need of ceremony between friends:—I knew you was

alone, at least that nobody but Clary was with you—and Clary is next to nobody!”

“Thank you, brother!” said Clarissa, with a smile of perfect good humour:—“Sisters may overlook what would disgust a wife; and, for sake of your lady, it would give me pleasure to see you a little more exact as to your personal appearance.”

“That is just what I was going to observe,” retorted her angry ladyship, “and is the wisest thing, I ever heard you utter!—Go!” added she, in a tone awfully solemn—“Go, Sir, to your toilet!—there abdicate your errors, and think of your good fortune, which has sent out that dear creature Lady Ann on a promenade with Lord Clarence!”

“I wish it were to the antipodes!” replied Arthur, with a broad grin; “better *abroad* than at *home*! But that is not *my* business!—I want the two hundred, mother, to pay for my wife’s coach-horses, which you would make me buy, though I told you they were d—d dear, and not worth half the money!”

Lady Ann liked them, Sir, and *her* approbation sanctifies *my* indulgence!” said her ladyship

ship, "so let me hear no more of your boyish comments; but, when you have made yourself proper, return hither, and you shall receive the paltry sum you have so ungraciously solicited."

Arthur, in truth, wanted the money for his own private uses, the necessity for which had kept him walking the whole preceeding night; and now, like a troubled ghost, wandering about to beg of some kind Christian to bury his body for the repose of his soul, having found that kind Christian in his own mother, he departed in peace to the world of spirits—choice spirits! still cloathed with mortality, and who, for the crime of wanting the *needful*, had actually driven him out of their society.

"Without vanity, I may say," cried Lady Illeworth, "that few ladies of condition have done so much for their families as I have done!—Nay, don't look grave, Clarissa, your turn will come next!"

Clarissa indeed did look grave; but her's was the gravity of prudence, not of envy.—She looked at her watch—saw she had considerably exceeded the time of her appointment—would

have taken her leave — and, with that intention rose to embrace her mother.

“ Where are you going, child ? ” asked her ladyship, with an emotion of real or pretended surprise — “ Sure your *cit* friends cannot presume to expect that *my* daughter is to become a *fixture* in their house ! ”

“ Dear mama, they are all goodness ! — But for them, you know, I should not have been able to have seen you this morning ! — You remember papa’s agreement with Mr. Curry, and I feel no repugnance in becoming the hostage of its fulfilment. ”

Your father is always doing silly things, and *that* of sending you into slavery with these people is one of the *most* foolish ! — However, if it must be so, go your ways ! — but remember to tell them, you are to attend your sister Lady Ann Isleworth’s presentation at St. James’s, next Thursday se’nnight. I shall prepare you a beautiful dress, my dear, for the occasion. — I hope you may look uncommonly handsome ! — The drawing-room will be crowded, and perhaps the Duke of ——— Oh, what a giddy creature I am ! ” she continued, in interrupting herself — “ it had almost escaped me ! — Well, now

ow you may set out!—Adieu!”—offering her cheek instead of her lips, to the salute of the silence-stricken Clarissa, who stepping back from the door, begged she might be allowed to look in upon her little sisters for one moment; but was told they were gone to see some dancing-dogs, just imported, at the Hay-market. She then enquired for the unfortunate boarders of the more unfortunate Parson Trotter; on which subject she received no other information, than that no letter had arrived from them since she left town, of course that their mother knew nothing about them!

“ I will write to them,” said Clarissa to herself, as she walked down stairs; and in less than half an hour she was in the arms of her protectors.

C H A P. XVIII. .

RECAPITULATION.

SIR FREDERICK, on the day appointed, having adjusted his money negotiation with Mr. Curry, and received from that gentleman the full price of his Westmoreland estate, returned home, threw two thousand into the lap of Lady Iskworth—it was a debt of honour, therefore he paid it)—another five hundred, also a debt of honour, he left on the toilet of Mrs. Snug—~~and~~, without saying what were his intentions, proceeded to the livery-stable where he kept his hunters, designing, with all expedition, to visit his borough, being informed, from the very best authority, that parliament would certainly be dissolved after a very short sitting.

In his way to Fozzard's, *Chance*, ever busy in carving for those with whose affairs Providence
does

does not chuse to trouble itself, threw in his path one of her own dashing sons, by whose eloquent persuasion he was prevailed on to delay his journey till the next morning, for the purpose of joining a party at one of the subscription-houses, which would probably not rise from play till day-light, as one of its members; his Grace Bilberry, was to be there for the first time that season.

To meet his Grace! of Bilberry!—his own son-in-law elect!—the husband of his daughter!—the father of his grandchildren!—and the very door of his own entrance to the House of Lords!—were inducements not to be resisted. He that day lounged with his friend; and, before midnight, had the felicity of being placed, not only at the same table, but actually *vis-à-vis* to the Duke of Bilberry, whom his new patroness, *Chance* made his partner for the first rubber, and to crown her favours, divided all the good cards between them.

A victory so complete, and so easily obtained, did not fail to relax the duke's natural reserve of countenance—he flattered the *visionary*'s skill with the most smiling condescension, and made him, if possible, ten times more the fool of expectation than ever. Of his own view,

he was forbidden to speak ; yet, when the rubber ended, he took an opportunity to informing his grace that he was immediately going to his borough - that he should be re-chosen to a *certainty*, but would never again vote with the *present* minister, - to which the duke only answered with a slight bow, and re-took his place at the table.

During the rest of the night the *great* and the *little* man came no more in contact ; whilst fickle fortune, who, like the world, always abides by the strongest, continued to fill the pockets of his grace, and to empty those of the baronet ; so that at nine o'clock in the morning, he found himself on Hounslow-heath, as much richer in hope as he was impoverished in circumstances, having left behind him, in the keeping of his shadowy son-in-law, solid bank-bills for three thousand five hundred.

Every thing that is needful to say concerning the rest of Sir Frederick's journey has already been said by Lady Isleworth, *viz.* that he had rode like a mad-man—had fallen from his horse—and dislocated his collar-bone ;—which accident happened to him within the convenient distance of only six miles from his borough, from whence he could receive the multitudes,

titudes, both gentle and simple, at their pleasure, the former from the body corporate, the latter from the body public. For the first he brought with him such ample provision, that they departed well satisfied—and the latter, not less contented, with showers of golden promises, backed by immediate orders to open every house of reception for their accommodation, and and to licence as many more private ones as could be purchased, for the hospitable purpose of taking them from wholesome labour, starving their families, and robbing them of their senses.

Having escaped from the hands of his surgeon with his head in its right place, in six days he joined his constituents on their own dunghill, where he must remain, till it be necessary, for the usual regulation of his affairs, that he should again shew himself in the circle of fashion.

The day preceding that which had been announced to Clarissa for the court presentation of her brother's wife, signifying at the same time that that she would be expected to attend the bridal cavalcade, Mrs. St. Edmonds made her some presents of beauty and value from her

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own casket. Besides, on the following morning, at the request of her brother, who would not even admit the appearance of disobedience to the commands of a parent, in which there was neither criminality or imprudence, she set her down at the door of her mother, and promised to call for her again in the evening, intending to sleep at her brother's town-house, for the accommodation of her favourite, whom Mr. Curry would not have been easy to leave under the dissipated roof of Lady Isleworth for one single night, lest that *one* night might lead to another, another, and another, to the damage, if not to the total overthrow, of all the rational sentiments which had sprung up in her mind during a three weeks residence in the country.

Lady Isleworth, when informed by Clarissa of the merchant's arrangements, stormed and pouted to no manner of effect, being well informed, that the authority with which he was invested could never be made to acknowledge her superiority: but when, to restore her good humour, Mrs. St. Edmond's magnificent presents were displayed, her countenance cleared—she protested Mrs. St. Edmonds did not want taste in the selection of feminine ornaments, or discrimination in bestowing them—selected a few of the most showy—said she would that day wear them, herself, but return them in
the

the evening—and shewed, to the astonished Clarissa, such a collection of shewy articles previously prepared for her exhibition, as must have gratified her vanity, had she been as frivolous in all respects as her mother.

Ursula acted as a high priestess at the toilet of her young lady, sometimes weeping, sometimes smiling, but always endeavouring to prevail on Clarissa to request of Lady Isleworth, that she might be allowed to return with her to Enfield Chace, “for, Miss,” said she, “I don’t know what you can do without me.—Besides, our family are all so at sixes and sevens, that I am now, as it were, nobody’s servant, yet employed by every body.”

Clarissa bade her be of good heart; for, though she did not want her attendance where she was provided with family servants, the most ready and the most obliging in the world, yet, if ever she happened to be her own mistress, (blushing at the supposition, because, perhaps, at that moment she thought of Percival Bateman)—“assure yourself, Ursula,” said she, “you shall have the first place in my establishment.”

“God send it speedy and happy, Miss!” replied Ursula; “I am convinced, in my own mind,

mind, you will be a great lady, and I should like to be your Ladyship's woman prodigiously !”

“ But why a *great* lady, Ursula ?”

“ How can it be otherwise, Miss, when we all know that your papa is going to be made a lord ?—for, though my lady says nothing about it, our upholsterer told us a violent secret last night, that he had her ladyship's orders to paint coronets on all the new furniture she has bespoke for the three large entertaining rooms !”

Before Clarissa could form an answer to what she considered the effusions of a dreamer, she received a summons to the drawing-room, where her mother and Lady Ann only waited for her chair to bring up the rear, preceded each by three footmen in new liveries, except Clarissa's, to whom one only could be allotted.

It would be superfluous to enter into a detail of the splendid dresses worn on the occasion : they were all fine, but Lady Ann's by far the finest ; and of the two sisters, her ladyship was the most strikingly handsome—Miss Iseworth the most

most insinuatingly lovely. As to Arthur, no arguments (and none had been spared by his mother) could prevail on him to shew himself in the royal circle.

CHAP. XIX.

SOMETHING TO PLEASE, AND SOMETHING TO VEX.

LADY ANN'S presentation passed off like other presentations—engaged much the same sort of attention—drew out the same sort of comments from the uninterested beholders:—some thought one thing, some another, as to the beauty of the rival sisters; but all who did not personally know either Lord Clarence or Arthur Isleworth, agreed in one opinion, that his lordship was the bridegroom, and of all bridegrooms the

the most fascinated and the most attentive which had ever appeared in the great world five weeks after marriage!

Lady Isleworth's head, always of the lightest, turned incessantly from side to side, hoping to discover the Duke of Billberry in the attitude of a lover, with arms folded, and eyes fixed on the face of his adorable!—But her ladyship had forgotten that his grace was no courtier, till recollection of the circumstance became necessary to soften the disappointment she severely encountered at not finding him in the circle. Lady Ann, on the contrary, was so agreeably engaged by Lord Clarence, that she saw not her own father, though he stood within a few paces of her; and, if she had chosen to be deaf as well as blind to all objects, *one* excepted, the name of Lord Benvour, pretty audibly announced, would have been announced in vain; but, entering the ear, the eyes followed, and met those of the old peer, to whom she dropped a smiling curtsy, which had in it nothing of reverence, and then whispered Lord Clarence—"Father Moses, you see, has wandered out of the Wilderness, and, thank my stars! no *wife* in his train!"

Lady

Lady Isleworth, with much greater joy, but infinitely less wit, made her comments on the *lonely* exhibition; whilst Lord Benvour seemed to consider himself totally independent of her ladyship, and her ladyship's family appendages.

Every body must know, that it is no more the duty of fine ladies to go to court, than to return from it dying with fatigue, to drop their hoops, lounge on sofas, and wish there was no such place in the world. This granted, can it be thought extraordinary, that the chairs were brought into the hall, without the languid fair ones, by whom they were freighted, casting a single glance on a sort of mongrel carriage just driving from the door, drawn by one weak animal, in a still more fainting condition than themselves? Such was really the case! But, had it chanced to have attracted their notice, the mystery of whom it conveyed could not have been sooner explained: for, on the heads of the chairs being lifted, two tall young women ran forwards, laughing, shouting, and throwing their arms around the neck of Lady Isleworth, crying out, as they seized her almost to strangulation—"Here we are, mama!"

Mama

Mama did not receive their caresses as any other mama might or ought to have done, to whose negligence alone was owing their gawky figures and unpolished manners; but wounded vanity and invaded authority assisted her to resist their rough endearments, which were bestowed with more success on the gentle Clarissa, who affectionately returned their embraces, and answered their importunate questions, till Lady Isleworth proceeded forward with more than common dignity, commanding her daughters to follow, not a little pleased that Lady Ann, by running to her dressing-room, had escaped the mortification of being called sister, by two such Hottentots—"As I live," said Lady Isleworth, mentally, "she shall not see them, till I have wrought their awkward figures into some sort of fashion!"

In one corner of the room whither she proceeded the young group (either of which might almost, in personal charms, have vied with Clarissa, had they been set off to the same advantage), stood a middle-aged man, whose uniform, whilst it bespoke him a son of the church, also, by its shabby rusticated appearance, announced him, of all her sons, the least indebted to her partiality for the goods of this world.

Bowing

Bowing low, he approached towards Lady Meworth, who blushing through her rouge as she entered at the door, and casting on him a dreadful look of fury, had ridiculously called out —“ My God! Sir, how came you here? —and how have you presumed to bring home the girls without my orders? —Nor waiting poor Parson Trotter’s reply, who, overawed by her commanding presence, rather chose to study for an answer than to make one extemporary, she rang the bell with so great violence that Mrs. Harris ran from her ladyship’s dressing-room with a bottle of drops, expecting at least to have found her in a fainting-fit, having anticipated the surprise she must experience on her return from court, at finding her family so suddenly, and, she feared, so unpleasingly augmented. —She therefore received the following command, without betraying any extraordinary tokens of astonishment.

“ Go, take these children,” pointing to her newly arrived daughters, and “ lock them up, in the tapestry apartment, that they may not run wild about the house, as they seem inclined to do! —Make haste, I say! —I would not have Lady Ann see the little savages in their present state for the universe!”

“ I will

“ I will go with them!—may I, mama?”
said Clarissa.

“ Do as you like—but it is not altogether
consistent with *your* dignity!” replied her lady-
ship.

“ Lord! mama, I cannot think what makes
you so huffish!” cried Arabella.—“ I hope ma-
ma,” said Matilda, “ when we are gone, you
will not believe *all* that Parson Trotter tells you!”
—“ Not a single word of *his* nonsense!” re-
joined Arabella; “ for if he tells tales upon us,
we can give him as good as he brings every day
in the week ”

Mrs. Harris shuffled them out of the
room, and Lady Isleworth opened with vio-
lence on the poor parson.

“ Perhaps, Mr. *What-d, ye-call'm*, you think
to defend the confusion your audacious conduct
has thrown my household into, by some ridicu-
lous made-up story or other?—Assure yourself
I shall listen to none of them!—But if you come
to be paid for transforming the Miss Isleworths
from polished young ladies to absolute hoydens,
where is your account?”

“ It

"It is here, my Lady!" replied Parson Trotter, trembling at her anger, yet rejoicing there was now some chance he should receive the balance—"It is here, my Lady!" presenting his own bill for board and lodging, and his wife's for past services, all blended together: and, while her ladyship's scornful eyes uncondescendingly glanced on the total, her fair hand took as many bank-notes from a splendid pocket-book as equalled the sum demanded; nor did she throw them at his head, but only on the table, bidding him take them up and be gone!—adding, "I had intended to send you Miss Diana and Miss Stella; but now, you may tell your wife, who must be the most altered woman in the world, that I have had quite enough of *her* talent for education!"

Writing a proper receipt, and depositing the notes in a little black case, where, on Sundays, he used to carry his sermons, and his band neatly folded, from church to church, he felt so happy at his own marvellous good luck, that the payment, and not the mode of making it, engrossed the whole of his attention—He acknowledged her generosity with the most submissive gratitude;—but, to show he neither heard, felt, or resented the ungracious illiberality of her reflections, re-seating himself at an awful distance,

ance, he drew from his waistcoat pocket a letter, the seal of which had been broken, addressed to Miss Arabella, from her adoring lover, clerk to the village attorney, containing the plan for a double elopement, himself and the young farmer having agreed to storm the parsonage that very night, after the family were gone to rest, to receive them in their arms from the low window of their apartment—to convey them on horseback, each being provided with a pillion, as far as——, at which town a post-coach was already secured to whirl them, as expressed by the adventurous hero, “to the land of love and matrimony!”

CH A P. XX.

CONSISTENCY.

“ACCIDENT, my Lady, threw this letter in my way,” said the Parson, presenting it with honest exultation, fully assured that he had performed to the extent of his duties.—“It was dropped by Miss Arabella, but she does not know that it has fallen into my hands.—My wife and I consulted together what could be done

to prevent the misfortune which threatened us; and no other certain method presented itself, than to put the young ladies under your Ladyship's own protection.—Yet how to get them away was the difficulty!—no chaise could be had!—so I borrowed from my neighbour the vehicle in which I brought them the whole journey, drawn by my own horse, and I bless God the poor beast did so well!—for indeed, my Lady, times have been so hard that it was out of my power to pay for the use of a better. The ladies made no objection to accompany me, as I told them it was only for an airing; but, when I had once got them on the road, I took care they should not elude my vigilance.”

Thus soberly harangued the *prudent* divine, whilst the *imprudent* mother, having first examined the curious epistle from the beginning to the end, instead of applauding the caution with which he had acted to preserve the honour of her family, accused him of having committed a forgery.—“No man under the rank of a peer,” said she, “could have dared to address such nonsense to the *Miss Isleworths*!—You have written this letter yourself, as an excuse for your audacious intrusion!”

This

This accusation being delivered in a tone remarkably loud and shrill, reached the ear of Arabella, placed quite close to the key-hole of the door in her mother's dressing-room, into which she had slipped unnoticed by Mrs. Harris, for the purpose of listening, and, almost before she could have been missed, rejoined the party above stairs, determined to meet Parson Trotter's charges with no other weapons than those so compleatly furnished in the retort barbarously levelled against his integrity by her Amazonian mama.

The upright priest would have cleared himself from the horrible stigma; but not being permitted to speak, or invited to take any refreshment, he left the house, as did Lady Ifleworth the room, at the same moment; and, it will be needless to say, that Arabella managed her own and Matilda's defence so adroitly, as to make her ladyship fully satisfied with the echo of her own suggestions.

Clarissa, perfected by nature, but a little deranged by education in the school of modern pursuits, saw and lamented the subterfuge to which her sisters had descended, so degrading to themselves, so pernicious to the character of
another.

another. She would have reasoned with them on the absurdity, as well as wickedness of their allegations against the worthy man, whose roof had long been their asylum—but no opportunity offered itself for serious remonstrances.

Lady Isleworth having discovered, by removing the caps and handkerchiefs of the two culprits, that they had the finest hair and bosoms in the world, thought them not altogether unworthy of her attention: she therefore took them with her to her own chamber, where, with good contrivance, equipped from her eldest daughter's wardrobe, at a nine o'clock dinner they were presented to their noble sister-in-law, two of the prettiest external figures imaginable.

Rather before six, Mrs. St. Edmonds sent up a message, to say that her servants waited the commands of Miss Isleworth, who immediately hastened to the carriage, without encountering any opposition from her mother, whose thoughts were just then most delightfully employed how to dispose of her lovely younger daughters, to the same advantage as she had already, by her very erroneous calculation, provided for their elder sister. She had yet to polish them after her own peculiar man-

ner—to bring them out—and to look about her for other two Dukes, or at least heirs to dukedoms, who were to lay themselves and honours at their feet: and thus dreaming, with her eyes open, she saw her favourite Duchefs of Bilberry depart, with more pleasure than regret—*her* fortune was made—her appearance may obstruct, but could not forward, the equally brilliant establishment of her sisters, to whom, after the toilet transformation, she fondly gave the appellation of beautiful *savages*, unharmonized by fashion.

The levity of Lady Illeworth did not more exalt her own spirits than it depressed those of Clansla.—She loved her family, and fearfully anticipated the return of those domestic evils which friendship had so lately driven from their gates she knew, that even the munificence of Mr. Curry could never keep pace with her mother's profusion—her heart yearned with affection towards those dear sisters from whom she had so long been divided, yet their return yielded her no solid satisfaction—she admired, without envying, their personal improvements; but, not without horror, contemplated the cunning exhibited so strikingly in the artful contrivance by which they

they escaped a censure for their own imprudence at the expence of another, whose innocent simplicity, and little knowledge of the world, leaves it doubtful whether he even knew what was the nature of that crime with which they had unblushingly accused him.

It was impossible, in this instance, that she could halt between *two* opinions; because, while Arabella was in the very act of listening, Matilda expressed much terror for the fate of a certain letter, "which had been," she said, "sportively written to, and carelessly dropped by them—she feared it might have fallen into the parson's hands. If this should be the case," she added, "Oh, dear, what will become of us!"

"Say as I do!" whispered Arabella, who came running into the room just in time to catch the timid ejaculation, before she was followed by her mother; on whose appearance their trial commenced—the verdict was given—the innocent condemned—the guilty acquitted!—and the judge particularly delighted with her own sagacity, when declaring, before the court, *that* she had anticipated the *low* fellow's artifice, and sent him about his business!"

Miss Hleworth, at this moment, felt all the disagreeables of her situation. Should she come forward as the accuser of her sisters?—or must she with-hold that evidence by which the fame of an honest man would certainly be justified? Impeded by partial affection, on one hand—impelled by unbiaſſed rectitude on the other—weighing alſo the dreadful conſequences attending a diſcloſure of the young machinator's duplicity to themſelves, againſt any material damage the character of Mr. Trotter could ſuſtain, ſecluded from ſociety, unknowing and unknown, the ſcale turned in favour of no *preſent* interference on her part.

Recollecting many errors in her own conduct, and many others that ſhe *might* have committed, had the early ſeeds of inſtruction been as ſcantily ſown in her mind as in thoſe of her plotting ſiſters, “I might,” thought ſhe, “uninformed like them, have acted like them in every inſtance.”

Impreſſive thoughtfulness threw over her lively countenance a veil of dejection, ſo ſombre as to attra& the firſt notice of Mrs. St. Edmonds, when ſhe joined that lady in her carriage.

“What,”

“What,” cried she, as they drove from the door—“What, my dear, has happened to fade the roses which good hours, and the wholesome air of Enfield, had made to flourish over the lily of your cheeks when I brought you hither?—No misadventure, I hope, has robbed you of the precious ornament!”

Clarissa, the moment before, fancied nothing but opportunity was wanting for the purpose of unburthening the contents of her full heart; but, when her courage should have been exerted, she became an absolute coward—the hesitation of a moment gave time to *thought* for producing his short-hand volume of *queries*—“Whom are you about to expose, and for what purpose?—Dare you descant on the extravagancies of a misguided mother, the frailties of your poor neglected sisters, yet conceal your own deviations from prudence with selfish caution?”—“Oh, no!” she mentally cried, “*their* errors shall be spared and my *own* exemplified!”

CHAP. XXI.

CONFESSION.

SPEAK, and relieve my anxiety!" continued Mrs. St. Edmonds, "are you very much fatigued? or has any thing happened to disturb you?"

Clarissa's eyes were bent downwards.—"I am not *quite* easy," she replied—"I have no *right* to be tranquil!"

"Say not so, my love, as long as your *own* conduct is irreproachable!—The misconduct of *others* should not produce such gloomy consequences!—my brother will be shocked to see you so dejected!—Come, rally your spirits, for his sake, and tell me your *court* adventures!"

"Dear Mrs. St. Edmonds! will you listen to, without hating me, if I tell you adventures
less

less recent than any which have occurred since we last parted?"

"I forbid you to doubt either my partiality or my patience!—affection will acquit, where prudence may condemn."

"Your words have already condemned me!"

"Explain yourself, my fair commentator!"

"Did you not make the irreproachability of my *own* conduct responsible for self-condemnation or self-acquittal? Ah! if I must stand or fall by my *own* actions, I am a lost creature!—I have deceived you!—I have imposed on your generous brother!"

"The promise of future candor seems to blossom so fairly on the branches of this confession," replied Mrs. St. Edmonds, "that I look with certainty for the fruit it will produce—so, my dear child, proceed!—Reserve is the canker-worm of friendship; henceforward let it be banished from our society."

Every thing like concealment flew before an invitation to confidence so kind, so gracious; and when the ladies alighted from their carriage, Clarissa had not only rendered up the dearest secret of her heart, but also acknowledged, that the silence of Percival Bateman, during the last six weeks, both surprised and grieved her.—To which her affectionate monitor only replied—“the stability of young men was so little to be depended on, that it became the duty of all women who would support their peace, as well as honour, not to repose too great faith in their vows of fidelity.”

Nothing of this confidential *tête-à-tête* was rehearsed to Mr. Curry.—“He must not,” said Mrs. St. Edmonds, “be discomposed, by a circumstance which, we already too well know, will give him more pain than pleasure. If your lover ever returns, it will be time enough to consult your guardian; or, if he should return a traitor to his former tender professions, the whole transaction may then be buried in oblivion; for I am sure my poor dear brother’s nerves would be dreadfully shaken, was he told of the business in its present stage!”

“Or of my duplicity!” hastily interrupted the conscious Clarissa—“I tremble at the thought

thought of incurring his anger—I could not support it!—Dear Madam, be *you* the guard of my indiscretion, as well as the future regulator of all my actions.”

Possibly I have *some* readers who prefer the society in Broad-street to the circle in Portman-square ; but the *many* will rather choose to follow the footsteps of fashion, than to go on plodding in the sober way of domestic *littleness*. To reconcile all dissensions of this nature, I refer the former for my apology, in dragging them from *good* to plunge them into *bad* company, to the title of my book, which in all cases has a principal claim to the author’s support—and to satisfy the latter, shall re-commence the performance of that established duty.

Leaving Miss Isleworth to entertain her indulgent guardians with the unexpected return of her sisters, painting the beauty of their persons, but veiling the deformity of their minds, let us take a peep into Lady Ann’s dressing room, where we shall discover what has been her employment, from the moment of her quitting her party in the hall to that when the dinner-bell summoned all the knaves and fools dignified by the name of Isleworth, to assemble themselves together.

Before she shewed her smiling countenance in the family group, which she seldom contemplated without some broader indication of mirth than a simple *smile*, her indefatigable ladyship had written and dispatched, with all possible privacy, the following letter, addressed to the Earl her father.

“ My dear Lord,

“ Ever since my fanciful elopement with
“ Arthur Isleworth, I have done nothing but
“ lament that *petit faux pas* in sackcloth and
“ ashes. The first glimmering of sunshine which
“ has broken in upon the dismal prospects of
“ of your poor penitent Ann, is derived from
“ your Lordship’s appearance at the drawing-
“ room this morning, without drawing a clog at
“ your heel—standing alone too !—when I ex-
“ pected to have seen your leading-strings sus-
“ pended from the hands of an odious step-mo-
“ ther, according to your anunciation of ven-
“ geance, which had nearly destroyed the whole
“ fraternity of hopefuls.

“ My God ! what fools they are !

“ Had Sir Frederick, and all the Isleworths
“ in the world, expired under their disappoint-
“ ment, assure yourself, my Lord, I would not
“ have added to my errors the crime of aiding
“ to lengthen their existence.

“ Will

“ Will not this declaration, my Lord, proceeding from the very bottom of my heart, convince you of my penitence, and awaken your pity ?

“ You cannot be half so angry with me as I am with myself—you are not half so unfortunate !—*I* am a slave—you have escaped captivity !

“ I asked old Lady Fidget Sarcasm, in the joy of my heart, why your new Countess did not appear ? who told me, that the poor thing had died on her bridal day ! To be sure it was very melancholy ; but, being prepared for a *change*, I suppose one change might have been as good as another !

“ I doat on a frolic, and such a masterly one I have been playing off against the anti-sapient Lady Isleworth, as would highly divert your Lordship, if you allow me to give it in my own way, and in *your* presence—a favour you will certainly not deny to my entreaties, especially when I pledge you my solemn faith, never again to connect your dignity with a race of plebeians, like those to whom, for my sins, I am condemned to associate—but not for ever !—I was bewildered when I linked myself to such a chain of absurdities. At all events, the spell shall be broken.

“ I hope to meet your Lordship’s approba-
 “ tion. The means to which I shall apply for
 “ regaining my freedom are extremely natural,
 “ and must be innocent, because every body in
 “ my deplorable predicament has recourse to
 “ them without scruple.

“ The stratagem is well-imagined, and will be
 “ executed with equal address.—I shall make
 “ that bear Arthur dance to the tune of my fid-
 “ dle through Doctor’s Commons!—after which
 “ exercise he may take his repose. However,
 “ I shall first leave one of his cubs behind me, to
 “ continue the notable generation!—a circum-
 “ stance the more provoking, as it will detain me
 “ six months longer. But Lord Clarence, who is
 “ the best creature in the world, says it *must* be
 “ so!—and I put myself entirely under his di-
 “ rection, because I already respect him as my
 “ future —.

“ Now, I would not have your Lordship
 “ suppose any harm to have passed between me
 “ and Clarence; on the contrary, it is well
 “ known what a guard we keep over our con-
 “ duct; yet, I dare say, shall be finely slander-
 “ ed in the Scandalous Chronicle. People
 “ judge by appearances; and without *appearances*
 “ there can be no remedy for the galling dis-
 “ ease of matrimony.

“ Arthur

“ Arthur has just sense enough for our purpose. He threatened me with a divorce, only six weeks after we became the torment of each other!—and for what?—Why, only because he chanced to find me alone with Clarence, who, happening to stumble on the carpet, fell at my feet, and I naturally held out my hand to raise him!—The tyrant dared to accuse, and even to expose me, before a party of old Tabbies, which convinces me how easy it will be to impose shadows for substance on his non-discriminating faculties.

“ Assure yourself, my dear Lord, whenever the time of my emancipation arrives, you will not find the Countess of Clarence less emaculate than when under your own roof. I hope to see you before I assume my new title; but my Lord will not presume to kiss your hands till I present him as your son, and the husband of your dutiful daughter,

A. ILSEWORTH.”

“ P. S. What I have written must remain a profound secret.”

C H A P. XXII.

EDUCATION.

LADY ISLEWORTH, flattered by the admiration Lady Ann, either from policy or conviction, bestowed on Arabella and Matilda, consulted her very seriously as to the means by which they might receive the best possible polish, remarking, "that though their persons were tolerable, their manners were intolerable!"

"There I entirely dissent from your Ladyship," replied her oracle, "in my opinion they every way surpass their *elder* sister!"

"Do you really think so?—I wish they may be as fortunate!"

"And why not, my pretty mama?"

"Ah, my dear, there are not three Dukes of Billberry "

"But

“ But there is the young Duke of Richland, the devineſt animal in the whole peerage!—I can ſwear he will be as much attached to Arabella as the other is to Clariſſa!”

“ Certainly you forget that his Grace is lately married!”

“ True!—yet he may get himſelf divorced, or his wife may die!—and *you know*,” with an invidious ſmile, “ ſuch prizes are worth waiting for at the wheel of fortune!—And I ſuppoſe, when the bar is down, that *all* men are not ſuch fools as Lord Clarence, to transfer the love of his miſtreſs like a bank note, becauſe his friend has a fancy to poſſeſs it.”

“ Nay but conſider, my dear,” cried Lady Iſleworth, “ that the very foundation of your ridicule binds me eternally to Lord Clarence—makes my whole family his debtors—and places the man who could offer ſo great a ſacrifice above all the heroes of romance.”

“ Well, there let us leave him,” ſaid Lady Ann, laughing; “ and, ſince you are not ſatisfied with contingencies, as in the caſe of his Grace of Richland, pray beſtow your thoughts on the Marquis of Crow.”

“ Why,

“ Why, I should not *dislike* his connection ; —but one never sees him in public, and I hear his establishment is extremely limited.”

“ His debts, however, are *unlimited* ! — which, according to the rules you have taught me, is extremely in his favour !”

“ Very much so, if one knew how he spends his money ! — he gives no balls ! — no faro bank ! — invites nobody to his house ! — makes no *eclat* on any occasion ! — There is very little *merit* in such sort of management !”

“ Oh, merciless !” exclaimed Lady Ann, lifting up both hands, “ what will they say next ! Poor cousin Crow ! is thy plumage, once so captivating, all — *all* gone ? — have the wicked world not left thee so much as *one* wing-feather ?”

“ Charming — exquisite Lady Ann ! — But tell me, I beseech you, is the house of Raven-crock nearly related to that of Benvour ?”

“ As nearly as two houses can be related, who, like a man and his wife, look very pleasantly at one another at a little distance ; from local vicinity, without any more of family blood in our veins than
their

there is in the walls of our castles. When children, I always used to call the Marquis *Cousin Crow*, because I knew it never failed to put him in a passion."

"Has his Lordship ever been esteemed a young man of remarkable promise?"

"Oh, most lavishly promising!—but a thousand times more notorious for breaking his promises."

"Well, well, there is no getting you to be serious!—He may do for *Die* or *Stella* by the time they are marriageable, but at present I want to proceed with these my two handsome savages!—There is nobody in the world but yourself whose judgment I would consult on their future education—Do dear creature, give me a system!"

"To be systematical then—In the first place, I would not be plagued with a parcel of starch coxcombs, such as dancing, singing-masters, and the like, to teach them this, that, and the other, under my roof."

"Right!—perfectly right!"

"I would

"I would have nothing to do with *them*, or their teachers, till they were *as* perfectly fashioned as their own *pretty* mama!"

"Agreeable flatterer!"

"Besides, if *I* was a mother, I should not admire three daughters fagging at my side like the church register, to tell tales about births and marriages."

"But how shall I dispose of them?"

"Nothing upon earth so easy!—My governess, who pretended to great alliances, was quite the *belle P'esprit*—entertaining to a degree knew every body and every thing!"

"What an acquisition!"

"She continued at the *Wilderness* I do not know how many years after the death of Lady Benvour, whom I do not remember. People did talk of a *certain* intimacy, at which she only shrugged her shoulders, and was not to be frightened out of her situation. My father, on sending her away, made her *quite* comfortable."

"But tell me," interrupted Lady Isleworth, almost breathless with impatience, "is she engaged?"

gaged? - are there any hopes that I may be fortunate enough to fix her in my family?"

"Oh, dear, no! - she now lives quite stileish in a house of her own, where you may send the girls."

"Is that possible?"

"Certainly! and I have had it in my head this half hour; for Madam *Flevetta* has always six young rantipodes of quality to educate, and receives no more than two hundred guineas for each. Lady Charlotte Diaper and Lady Betty Hagg are *quite* finished—they are to come out on the birth-day when there must be two vacancies."

"How providential!—And will you, my dear Lady Ann, use your interest, that my two daughters may fill them?"

"Depend on it!—she never refuses my recommendation.—I will push them down her throat, if she refuses to take under a *certain* rank!—nobility is her passion!"

"Cannot you then tell her, in confidence, that we are on the very verge of the peerage!
—and,

—and, if she has these sort of objections, we had better remove them at once, by letting her in to the secret!”

“ Lord ! I may as well tell her you are on the verge of a precipice !—she would not trouble her head whether you was lifted up or tumbled down—No matter, I know how to manage her scruples !”

“ Do but conquer them, and I am the most obliged person in the world !—I shall not think of taking them back till their sister is Duchess of Billberry !”

“ Say not so, my pretty mama ; it would be monstrous to think of converting a modern seminary into a school for ancients !”

“ I profess not to understand your Ladyship, though the science of repartee has been the study of my life !—What can be your meaning ?”

“ Obviously, that the charming girls should not be cooped up like nuns till they are grey headed.”

“ Grey

“ Grey headed !” retorted Lady Isleworth, “ pray, Lady Ann, how long do you suppose it may be before the Duke of Billberry compleats his negociation for the hand of my daughter ?”

“ Why, I should apprehend, not till the whole batch of *us* are made into peers and peeresses ! *for instance*, your Ladyship and Sir Frederick in *possession*—Arthur and I in *reversion* !”

“ Now you speak like yourself—These things will certainly happen long before my little ones are *grey-headed* !”

“ Pretty mama, pray—pray be not offended, for you know it is become the fashion to call every body an old maid, or an old cat, who happens to turn the corner of twenty in blessed singleness !”

“ Why, let me see !—it is possible Arabella *may* turn that corner under the instructive tuition of your late *admirable* governess ; but Matilda, who is scarcely seventeen, will come out to much greater advantage ; for, when I take home one, the other shall not be left behind. At all events, I am determined
they

they shall be succeeded by Diana and Stella. It is the ambition of my foolish maternal fondness, that the girls, without exception, should be all as rays to reflect the graces of their accomplished sister-in-law !”

Their accomplished sister-in-law, with that sort of courtesy which indicates much more of ridicule than respect, accompanied with gesticulations perfectly grimacial, was acquitting herself of the obligation which a compliment so flattering fastened on her gratitude without feeding her vanity, when the entrance of the house steward, who had been sent on a message, not only broke in upon the subject, but also put an end to the conference.

Now as so many wise plans have already been laid down by learned men and learned women, concerning the education of young ladies, we think, except for variety's sake, the whole Hleworth system might have been omitted, without loss to the rising generation.

C H A P. XXIII.

THE HOUSE.

“WELL, Bliffit!” cried Lady Illeworth, in a tone of much agitation, the moment he set his foot within the door, “am I to have the house?”

Bliffit, being thrifty of speech, never ventured to speak till he had first well weighed the number of words necessary to indicate consumption, and the question was repeated.

“Am I to have the house?”

Before the answer, though it struggled for birth, could be brought into the world, the colour of her ladyship changed like that of the *fabulous*ameleon; and, having again recourse to her smelling-bottle, a third time she asked, trembling with the irritation of suspense—

“Am

“ Am I to have the house ?”

“ You may have it, my Lady !”

“ In the name of stupidity, why did you not tell me so at once ?”

“ Don’t hurry the poor old man !—you see his labour is extremely painful !”

“ Lady Ann ! Lady Ann !—you would not censure my anxiety if you knew the *delightful* house, and that I intended it for your future establishment !—So you are *sure*, Blissit, that I may have it ?”

“ Very sure, my Lady.”

“ Then step back to the people—tell them I must have immediate possession !”

“ They expect to be paid for the lease, my Lady.”

“ Nonsense !—I take their house— I give them five hundred a year—what have I to do with the lease ?”

“ They

"They ask six hundred!—not bate a farthing!—I hope your Ladyship will have nothing to do with it."

"But I certainly shall have something to do with it!—If I cannot get it without, I *will* have it, with the lease. Do you think I shall let the third best house in Grosvenor-square slip through my fingers for so *paltry* a consideration? Have greater respect, Mr. Steward, for your master's heir, than to suppose it possible!"

"Your Ladyship had better not."

"None of your advice!—Let the people know I am ready to pay for the lease."

"Indeed, your Ladyship had better not."

"You must certainly have some very particular reason, old gentleman," said Lady Ann, "for objecting to your lady's liberality in procuring a *quiet* residence for Mr. Illeworth and myself!"

"The house in Grosvenor-square will not be a *quiet* residence, my Lady."

“ Perhaps, then, it is haunted !”

“ *Ruin* has haunted it a long time, my Lady !”

“ Oh, *that* spectre stalks about in all families of fashion !—up stairs, down stairs ! here, there, every where !—we are quite familiarized to its ghastly countenance !—Pray, has it *never* crossed *your* path in the houses to which your services have been attached ?”

He gravely shook his head—it was all the answer he made to so *home* a question ; but in few words, began to recount the disastrous adventures of three several families which succeeded to each other in the Grosvenor-square house, who had all come into it rich, and gone out of it poor.

Lady Ann laughed immoderately.—Lady Inleworth’s pause of surprise at his freedom was broken. “ I beg you will not permit *my* servant to enter into such sort of details in your presence,” said the grand conductress of *all* affairs, confused, irregular, and complicated.—“ Be gone, Blisset !”

“ Where,

“Where, my Lady?”

“To the house!—Order my coach this moment!—I shall take Lady Ann to see it before I conclude the purchase.”

“Now, in the name of wonder, why would you interrupt my amusement?—Is any thing upon earth so charming as to hear what becomes of people whom one *has* known but *suddenly* Misses, without guessing why or wherefore their places in *our* circles are vacuated?”

“Surely, Lady Ann, no credit assimilates with information obtained through the channel of our domestics?”

“On the contrary, I give them *more* credit than I bestow on reporters of any other class.”

“Certainly your Ladyship is mighty singular.”

“Far from it!—I know an hundred of the same opinion. I wish you had not sent away the old man, for he diverted me extremely.”

“There is the coach!” cried Lady Isleworth, as if glad to get rid of a conversation

which had, some how or other, incumbered her composure.—“ I have laid out a delightful tour :—I must first procure your approbation of the house—next take you to chuse furniture—afterwards call to secure your opera-box—and then, I think, we shall not be *too* early for the divine *Madame Flevetta* !—positively you must introduce her to me this very morning !—I sicken with impatience for the sight of that all-accomplished creature, and shall die with mortification if she does not consent to give my rough diamonds something of the same beautiful polish your Ladyship so eminently possesses !”

Herculean would be our labour to keep pace with those wheels whose velocity out-run all other motion, when directed by two wilful women, madly pursuing pleasure or extravagance, unitedly the pursuit of that precious pair, now rattling over the pavement to fulfil their various appointments. Suffice it to say, Lady Ann’s well-feigned violent admiration of the Grosvenor-square house, entirely counterfeited, for the purpose of helping the family of her husband on to the very brink of perdition, where she meditated to turn her back upon them for ever, produced the desired effect ; for, though she neither made observations herself as
she

she hurried through the spacious apartments, or attended to those pointed out by Lady Isleworth, yet a few rapturous expressions, judiciously applied, at once compleated her ladyship's gratification, and the eagerly desired purchase.

The same sportive inclination to mischief accompanied Lady Ann from shop to shop, through the whole of their morning peregrinations: she fell in love with every thing uncommon, and expired for every thing that was expensive, till, meeting with no obstructions to her ruinous fancies, she grew tired with indulging them, even before Lady Isleworth imagined that half her profuse orders for ornamental furniture had been issued; and when her *second self* proposed adjourning to Madame *Flevetta's*, whose time for receiving visits would otherwise elapse, she replied—

“Then, for Heaven's sake, let us not lose another moment—to-morrow will be soon enough for the opera-box; and, as to these people, they may wait on you at home to receive your Ladyship's farther directions.”

The next instant found them re-seated in their carriage.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE GOVERNESS.

STOPPING at the door of an handsome house in ——— street, Lady Ann, being told Madame *Flevetta* was at home, bounced from the splendid equipage without ceremony, desired her companion to follow, ran into the hall, mounted the stair-case, and rushed to the drawing-room, before the servant who preceded her could possibly announce her approach.

At the door she made a short pause—it was the pause of astonishment, at beholding Lord Benvour sitting on a sofa, by the side of Madame *Flevetta*.

Shame had no part in the composition of Lady Ann, and cunning never deserted her.

She would have gone forward—she felt no fear of her father's resentment, though as yet
yet

yet he had returned no answer to her curious penitential epistle—she felt no mortification at what she considered the renewal of an ancient partiality for Madame *Fevetta*—she had no wish to interrupt the tender *tête-à-tête*; on the contrary, had policy permitted her to break in upon the lovers' privacy, she would have laughed at, rather than frowned upon them.

Interested only for the success of her own affairs, and by no means certain that her father, should he happen to be out of humour, would not expose her plans before they were ripe for execution, to Arthur's mother, who may again repeat them to Arthur himself, suddenly she turned back, under pretence of whispering a few nothings in the ear of Lady *Isleworth*; by which contrivance she gave his lordship, who must have seen her enter as well as retreat, the optional choice of avoiding or meeting her.

Every thing happened to her wish: for, before she presented the ladies to each other, the noble visitor had vanished, and left his *chère ami* in the full possession of all that native intrepidity ever invulnerable to the shafts of accident, whereby she was enabled to give, unruffled,

the daughter of Lord Benvour a very affectionate, and Lady Isleworth a very gracious reception.

Oh!" cried the former, as soon as they were seated, "Am I not a good creature to bring you my *pretty* mama, whom you know I have done nothing but rave about ever since I married the *adorable* Arthur!"

Madame, more indebted to animation than beauty for her powers of captivation, conveyed, in her smiling assent to this requisition, the most flattering approbation and the most consummate ridicule; the one as pointedly understood by Lady Ann as the other was eagerly adopted by her *pretty* mama.

"You are sensible, my dear, that I am not prone to vanity," said her ladyship, "or I should be absolutely overwhelmed by your representation of me to your charming friend.—Arthur is equally indebted on the same score; for I declare to you, *Madame Flevetta*, that this is the *first* time I ever heard her sly ladyship call my son her *adorable*."

"And it may be the *last*," retorted Lady Ann, "because fools only repeat the same things twice over."

I doat

“ I doat on your wit, but pray do not let it run away with your memory,” said Lady Isleworth; I beg your Ladyship will explain to Madame Flevetta the *domestic* motive of my intrusion.”

Lady Ann immediately began her negociation after this whimsical manner—

“ Why, you must know, *Flevetta*, we have more raw girls upon our hands than we know how to dispose of, if you do not consent to take them, and work them into something like fashion.”

“ Lady Isleworth drew up at hearing her daughters spoken of so contemptuously, and asked *Madame*, “ if she might hope Miss Arabella Isleworth, together with her sister Matilda, could be accommodated in her family, and receive the advantage of her tuition ?”

Madame Flevetta, turning her large dark eyes, full of complacency, on the beseeching countenance of her new acquaintance, lamented with all possible good breeding, her incapacity to avail herself of Lady Isleworth’s condescension, having no likelihood of any immediate vacancy.

“ And I have no patience with all this nonsense!” cried Lady Ann. “ In three words, the case is this—*We* have at present two fine blood-colts ready for the harness, with two others in the stable, to whom the bridle of restraint will become necessary. Enraptured by the specimen *I* exhibit of your art in the *manège*, my pretty *mama* will break her heart, and I shall hate you as long as I *live*, unless you take our *little ones*, vacancy or no vacancy, into training.”

“ Strange creature!” exclaimed Lady Isleworth; “ you speak my sentiments, but in what cobweb cloathing do you present them to Madame Flavetta?”

“ Just as I present myself to the world,” retorted her witty ladyship, “ and as all people in the world present themselves to each other.—Look at *me*—look at *yourself*—look at *Madame Flavetta*!—what are our delicate muslins and thin petticoats more than cobweb coverings?”

“ Her ladyship was born with excellent talents for comedy,” observed the *belle* governess, “ none of my present set will ever possess half her cleverness.”

“ Now

“ Now you talk of your present *brood*, pray let us see them.”

“ I should like vastly to catch a peep at the future companions of the Miss Isleworths,” re-echoed their provident mama; “ I *cannot*, I *will* not suppose my girls so unfortunate as to be absolutely rejected when a vacancy *shall* happen in this delightful family; only, dear madam, promise them the preference—indeed, I cannot take my leave, without carrying away this enchanting promise.”

“ I wish I could indulge your *curiosity*, ladies, as well as assure Lady Isleworth how much I shall think myself honoured with the charge of her fair daughters; but Lady Charlotte is taken out by my Lady Angelhook and her brother the elegant Colonel, to a raffle—Lady Betty is gone with a young party to Windsor—and the Old Countess of Doubledon’s grand-daughter, with her three cousins, has given me the slip, to procure some new publications from the circulating library in Bond-street.”

Soon after the female trio who formed this *conversation* separated, Lady Isleworth returned home the most delighted, Lady Ann the most diverted of mortals, and *Madame* remained
alone,

alone, to renew her *tête-à-tête* with Lord Benvour, who, during the short interruption, had amused himself in the examination of some capital prints in the next apartment.

And here it may not be amiss to enter, for a moment, into his lordship's sentiments, prior as well as subsequent to the receipt of his daughter's letter, artfully calculated to flatter his ambition and gratify his revenge.

Parents seldom look to their own conduct for the mirror which would shew them their virtues, their vices, or their errors, reflected in that of their children.

Before the birth of his only legitimate offspring, Lord Benvour had connected himself by a very tender attachment to a little French orphan, supported by the charity of his lady, whose only reward for her benevolence was a broken heart.—Jealousy embittered her days, and vexation shortened them.

Mademoiselle now assumed the title of Madame Flevetta, on the immediate appointment of governess to the lovely infant of her ill-treated benefactress.

She

She accepted the situation with reluctance, having aspired to the very first in the family of her *enamored*; but, finding him proof against fits, tears, and entreaties, to admit her a partner in all the privileges of his rank, she condescended to accept the office of preceptress to a little *innocent*, hardly four years old, whose morals, at fifteen, were compleatly warped by precept—every sense of shame smothered by habit—and the most daring profligacy acquired by example.

On Lady Ann's elopement, her father felt his disappointment much more pungently than he chose to acknowledge; he therefore seemed to treat her imprudence with cold contempt rather than burning anger.

Madame Flevetta, who two years before had formed an establishment of her own, but preserved some dregs of her former influence over his intoxicated senses, knew how to remove the burden of accusation from the shoulders of her *ci-devant* pupil, by throwing the substantial guilt on those of her seducers, and leaving only the shadow reflected on the reputation of her favourite.

These

These frequent representations added so much fuel to the flame of his lordship's wrath against the Isleworths, that before he answered the letter addressed to him by Sir Frederick, in extenuation of his son's offences, he had offered his hand to one of his tenant's daughters, in hopes that the birth of an heir might crush all their expectations, leaving them nothing to feed on in the storehouse of futurity.

The sudden death of his intended Countess brought his lordship to town, in pursuit of a more stable fair one; and, whilst looking round the royal circle to make his election, his eyes fell upon his daughter.

He felt more affection for her at that moment than he had ever felt before, and said to himself, as he turned away from the occasional glances of Lady Isleworth—"Curse the old coquette!—If Ann could break her fetters I would forgive her for putting them on."

His lordship continued in the same peaceable state of mind to the moment when Lady Ann's epistle reached his hands, which, the same day, he personally conveyed to those of Madame Flevetta, who strengthened his newly revived sentiments in favour of Lady Ann so much,

much, that he renounced the scheme of a second marriage, and, in the speculation of her ladyship's arrangements, added to a splendid alliance in reversion, he sat himself down perfectly content with his domestic prospects, determined to remain neuter till he could receive his daughter as Countess of Clarence; for which reason alone he would enter into no correspondence with, or even look at Lady Ann, when she came upon him by surprise in the house of *Madame Flevetta*.

He wished success to the cause with his whole soul, but *his* interference, he thought, would retard rather than promote it. To *know* that his daughter was an adultress gave him less pain than he received pleasure, from the consideration of the disgrace her criminality would draw down on her husband and his family.—He would neither write to or converse with his daughter prior to her emancipation, but resolved, wherever chance might throw him in the way of Lord Clarence, to treat him with marked distinction, as the prelude to a perfect reconciliation when the grand event should be accomplished.

CH A P. XXV.

WHAT MAY BE EXPECTED.

CLARISSA having once opened her heart to Mrs. St. Edmonds, respecting its inquietude for a first, and, as she feared, an unfortunate passion, found so sweet a consolation from the maternal tenderness with which she would now soothe the smart of disappointment, now strengthen the wounded mind to support it, that by degrees, like a flower in the bud, she unfolded every rising thought to the comforting warmth of friendly confidence, a type appropriate to describe that blessed luminary before whose cherishing rays Nature proudly displays her whole store of concealed treasures. So loves the bashful maiden blushing to yield up her dearest secrets on the bosom of friendship.

Mrs. St. Edmonds managed her stricken patient with such skilful address, that, in spite of Percival Bateman's obstinate silence, she could
not

not but flatter herself Clarissa's cure was more than half effected.

Her progress in the acquirement of health—her renovated spirits—the composure with which she reasoned on the probability of her lover's being unfaithful—her sensible plans for supporting the dignity of her own conduct, by sending back all Percival's letters, as soon as she should be informed of his return to Britain—and frequent protestations never more to *think* upon him, except with the most perfect difference—not only imposed on the credulity of Mrs. St. Edmonds, but completely deceived herself.

The Queen's birth-day happened at the distance of three weeks from the time of Lady Ann's presentation, and Miss Isleworth was again summoned to swell out the train of this second pompous exhibition.

The order came accompanied with a very civil request from her mother, soliciting Mr. Curry's permission for Clarissa to remain in town till the week following, to receive her father and amuse her sisters, "who, poor things, were moped to death," she said, "for want of society."

However

However mortifying the necessity for parting so many days from their darling inmate, neither Mr. Curry or Mrs. St. Edmonds threw any impediments in the path of her obedience, to which she yielded with reluctance, having already learned how to estimate rational enjoyments, and how to despise the pursuits of a dissipated multitude.

Something like a sad *pre-sentiment* clung upon her ideas as she entered the mansion of extravagance. Ursula, who knew her young lady was expected, anxiously waited her arrival at a window, from whence she flew down to the hall and met her at the door, where with all the ignorant signals of astonishment peculiar to her station, she announced the elopement of Arabella and Matilda, who before their mother returned from the Haymarket masquerade, had that morning made their escape from the tapestry chamber, and were gone off with two gentlemen, who had been seen to carry them away in a coach and six at the bottom of ——— street.

Less surprised then grieved at her sister's misconduct, Clarissa rushed into the presence of Lady Isleworth, expecting to have found her in as pitiable a situation as when struggling with
with

with those horrible hysterick fits to which she had seen her reduced by the simple operation of an undertaker's epistle ; but, instead of finding an afflicted mother, torn with anguish for the fate of her imprudent children, she saw her ladyship sitting before a glass, fancifully adjusting, by way of rehearsal, the ornaments which were intended to adorn her own person the day following.

" Oh, mama !" cried Clarissa, throwing herself on a chair, and bursting into tears, which impeded her farther utterance.

" Well, what's the matter *now*, Miss Isleworth ? Your sisters *are* gone !—that is neither your fault nor mine. We must forget them and their disgrace altogether.—You, as well as Arthur, Diana, and Stella, will fare the better for their indiscretion."

" Say not so, mama—I would rather be a beggar than enriched by their shame !—Dear mama, may they not *yet* be overtaken ?"

" Yes, child !—No doubt when they are acquainted with the *cream*, and reflect that they have only given themselves to the very *scum* of the nation, repentance will overtake them."

" But

“ But the people you must have sent to pursue the ill-fated girls, may *they* not be in time to rescue them from incurring the dreadful penalty of their errors ?”

“ Are you out of your senses too, Miss Isleworth !—Do you suppose I have not enough to employ my servants, so near the birth-day, without sending them God knows where, galloping after two run-aways !—No, let them follow their own inventions—I have done with them for ever !——Now, tell me your opinion of this cap—it is sent home, you see, with only two feathers—three, I think, would be much handsomer, and infinitely more becoming.—Lord ! child, dry up your tears, or go to your chamber !—such sorrowful countenances always give me the vapours.”

Unable to obey this lack-feeling command in its first instance, with the second Clarissa readily acquiesced, there to lament her sisters' imprudence and her mother's insensibility ; but was not long suffered to enjoy that privilege unmolested, it being interrupted by a summons from her ladyship, who fastened on her reluctant duty the disagreeable task of informing Sir Frederick with every peculiar respecting the elopement of his two daughters, which, though
amounting

amounting to no more than that they were gone, and had been seen to enter a coach, conducted by two young men, at four in the morning, Clarissa could not retrace on paper, without mingling her ink with the overflowings of her own sadness.

Maugre the respectful, but energetic eloquence of all the filial remonstrances that could be advanced by Miss Isleworth, to persuade her infatuated mother of the impropriety which might reflect on their own characters, by going into public so immediately subsequent to their family misfortune, her sensible observations produced no change in the resolution of Lady Isleworth—to Court she *would* go—and Lady Ann supported the *fiat*, by a declaration, “that she had no notion of young women turning *dictators*; even less, that the frolicks of two giddy-pated chits *should* overturn the system of *wiser* people.”——Clarissa did not, in her own mind, admit of the distinction, but, fearing that any retort might offend her mother, she remained silent, and the next day attended them to the drawing-room, the whole party more splendidly, and, if possible, more extravagantly equipped, than on the bridal presentation; to the expence of which might be added the richly embroidered effulgent coat of the bridegroom, whom a
weighty

weighty bribe from his doating mama had prevailed on for once to shew his handsome person in the royal circle? for which honour he duly prepared himself, by attending the preceding day at the King's levee.

C H A P. XXVI.

THE TOUCHSTONE OF HEROISM.

HITHERTO we have seen Clarissa sustain her own tender disappointments, whether real or imaginary, with much greater firmness than she supported the ruinous consequences of her parents' dissipation; but let us behold her in the very act of surveying, with fixed eyes and changing colour, Percival, her beloved Percival, kneeling to kiss the fair hand of majesty, and we shall discover her former universal commiseration all centered in the most torturing agony of selfish despair, every moment exaggerated by the whispers which reached her ear from an admiring crowd of spectators, that his pre-

sentation by Lord Dunston was the prelude of his marriage with his amiable cousin, the eldest daughter of that nobleman—her soul sickened at the officious report—her eyes closed—her head grew giddy—Lord Claunce caught her in his arms, when no longer able to support herself, and with the assistance of her brother, bore the lifeless burden to an outer room, followed by Lady Ann and Lady Isleworth, who insisted on her being sent home the moment she began to recover, leaving the gentlemen to conduct her, whilst they themselves returned to the circle.

Harris, greatly alarmed for her young lady, whom she saw in a state of insensibility, sent for the household apothecary, by whose orders she was conveyed to bed, the room darkened, quiet prescribed, and a terrible fever prognosticated, which, before the ladies re-entered the house, was in part verified; “but not so bad,” observed her mother, to the physical attendant, from whom, without going into the sick chamber, she listened to a long train of unfortunate symptoms—“not *so* bad as to prevent my attending Lady Ann to the ball—the poor child will be better to-morrow; or, if worse, you may send for Dr. W———.

Here

Here let me observe, that this *tender* parent, not to disturb the repose of her suffering daughter, had the *great* consideration to order change of dresses for herself and Arthur's wife at the Grosvenor-square house, by this time completely furnished, having engaged to conclude the night with a select party of *Faro's* honourable family.

Before midnight Clarissa became delirious: the physician arrived, pronounced her disorder the small pox, but gave hopes that the sort would be favourable. Harris acquainted her lady with these particulars, whilst *unmaking* her toilet at five o'clock in the morning, who said she would be called at whatever hour Dr. W——— repeated his visit, devoutly praying, not for the life of Miss *Lleworth*, but the preservation of her beauty. When told he was just come from the sick-chamber, and waited her ladyship's commands, she declared herself so fatigued, and so very sleepy, that it was impossible she could get up, but should thank him if he would come to her bed-side. He readily acquiesced; confirmed her most sanguine hopes, that the charms of her daughter were threatened with no diminution.—“The fever,” he said, “had abated, the pustules appeared, and every thing was in a fair train for her speedy recovery.”

“ You

"You not know, Sir," cried the delighted matron, "what exquisite pleasure it gives me, to hear you say that this dirty disease will leave none of its disgusting traces on the features of Clarissa.—And now," presenting him with a double fee, together with one of her *not* uncomely hands, "be is so good as to tell me, sincerely, if I am equal to any *particular* exertions."

"Your pulse, Madam," he replied, drily, after serious examination, "beats in perfect unison with those of most other ladies of your own rank in society."

"But do you think I may venture to take a journey?"

"Certainly."

"And that I shall have strength enough, at the end of it, to enter upon a mighty active situation?"

"What your Ladyship *has* done is the best encouragement for what you may yet be able to do."

The secret now came out, that she had, on the preceding evening, learned from undoubted authority, Parliament would dissolve the next

day but one; upon which intelligence she had made a party with her son, Lady Ann, and Lord Clarence, to give Sir Frederick their personal support in carrying his election.—“ And you know, my dear Sir,” said she, “ what a *bore* it must be to preside over the entertainments of such a *swinish multitude*. But without this sacrifice Sir Frederick will make no hand of it.”

Dr. W—— hinted, “ that as the members would not be returned immediately, it might be better, both for her health and satisfaction, to delay the journey until Miss Isleworth’s recovery should be completely established.”

To the first part of this remonstrance she replied, that delays were dangerous, and many votes might be lost to her husband, which the charming vivacity of Lady Ann would certainly secure.”— As to the second, she assured him, when taking his leave, “ that she should, soon as she could get up, write to Miss Isleworth’s *city* acquaintance, a mighty notable gentlewoman, to come and supply the place of nurse in her absence”——She actually did, that very day, address a letter to Mrs. St Edmonds; and in the evening this distracted party took their departure for ——shire, where their company was neither expected or desired.

His

His sister attended Mr. Curry to Portman-square, in consequence of the unpleasant intelligence conveyed to them by the mother of their adopted darling, muttering execrations the whole way on the unfeeling parent, who could thus abandon her child to the most virulent of all diseases. But finding, by the evidence of his own senses, its symptoms uncommonly favourable, his alarms, though not his anger subsided; and, sending for the *maitresse d'hotel*, he informed her, that neither Mrs. St Edmonds or himself should leave the house till Miss Isleworth could return with them; at the same time, putting thirty guineas into her hand, he desired she would provide for their accommodation.

Clarissa did not detain them long on this charitable visit; she received them in her dressing-room, and four days after, with the perfect approbation of Dr. W——, she attended them back to Enfield, with only the mark of two small crimson spots on her left cheek, and a thorn in her heart, which all the tender skill of her affectionate confidential friend vainly endeavoured to extract. Mrs. St Edmonds scorned to administer for the *true* balsam of hope the quack medicine of fantasy: she believed Percival really unfaithful; therefore had no recourse to

probabilities or *possibilities* to hoodwink the senses of an amiable girl, already but *too* susceptible. In a few weeks she had reason to congratulate herself on the success of her new mode of practising on a wounded spirit: Clarissa's cheerfulness returned; she seldom spoke of her lover; and every thing went on as before accident threw him in her way at St. James's.

Lady Isleworth reckoned erroneously, in supposing the presence of her riotous party at — would assist the cause of Sir Frederick; nothing could have been more *mal-a-propos*; he cursed their officiousness from the very bottom of his heart; and, had *he* ever been in the habit of command, *or* the ladies in that of obedience, they must have decamped: instead thereof, they set themselves down at an hotel, the headquarters of Sir Frederick, where he lived pretty nearly at the same rate that a Prince of the blood would have been charged in Pall-Mall or Germain-street.

Lady Isleworth gave balls, concerts, and masquerades.—Lady Ann, driven by Lord Clarence in his curricle, *begged* from door to door, and offered her fair cheek to the lips of every greasy voter inclined to taste of its ambrosial sweetness.—

sweetness.—Arthur got drunk oftener than once in the four and twenty hours—Whilst Sir Frederick walked about sullen and silent, like the ghost of his own departed hopes, martyred by anticipation, having first squandered seven thousand pounds, that his son might succeed him in the borough when himself should be called up to the House of Lords.

The mother of Arthur persisted in her *usual* creed, that every thing was going on just as it should do;—the wife of Arthur boasted, that *her* condescensions had made more voters than all the Baronet's gold;—whilst Arthur himself, when blessed with the powers of articulation, swore that strong beer and roast beef were the very best friends in their interest.

Amidst the convivial harmony of an election, it will not appear extraordinary *that* the hitherto *discreet* lovers should, at an unguarded moment, have furnished Mr. Isleworth with *all* the materials for a divorce—*that* Lady Ann should be sent back to her father—Lord Clarence scamper off from the field of detection—*that* Lady Isleworth should plead for her *amiable*, but *too* unfortunate daughter-in-law—*that* she should attribute the *accident* to *poor* Arthur's slovenly inattentions—

that poor Arthur should feel himself the happiest of the whole party—or that Sir Frederick should curse them altogether.

Such were our divided family on the eve of the election, some going one way, some another; but, though Lady Ann and Lord Clarence took different roads, they met by appointment at ———, and one chaise conveyed them to the house of her ladyship's *ci-devant* governess.

Arthur, panting for freedom, turned a deaf ear to the commands of his father, beheld with indifference the affected fits of his mother, and galloped away towards Doctor's Commons for redress of grievances.

He first alighted in Portman-square to refresh; but there no refreshment could be produced, except one servant only; the whole household, together with his two little sisters, had emigrated to Enfield Chace, and the goods of his father were once more under requisition. He bestowed some hearty *anti*-blessings on the law-agents, and made the best of his way to his own house in Grosvenor-square, without finding his condition changed for the better, a second battalion

talion from the *corps legal* having taken possession of that also.—How all these matters came about will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAP. XXVII.

VARIETY.

LADY Isleworth, when she agreed for the lease of the house, gave a check upon old Bateman for the purchase-money, her ready cash being nearly dissipated. Of this she advertised him by a well-studied *billet-doux*, not doubting but he who had done *so* much would do *more*, on the same usurious terms. A *carte blanche* accompanied her note, which he was at liberty to fill up with what figures he pleased, whether for six hundred or six thousand pounds was a matter of the utmost indifference to her ladyship, and the next day she set out to join her husband at——.

The person who received the check, well satisfied as to the credit of Bateman, delayed more than a week, till other business carried him to the city, before he presented it for payment, when, to his utter astonishment, it was not only simply *protested*, but with such vehement execrations on the extravagance of Lady Isleworth, that, as soon as he returned home, he sent in an execution to secure himself; which no sooner took air, than the proprietor of the Portman-square house, to whom Sir Frederick was two years in arrears for rent, followed his example.

These steps proclaimed so general an alarm amongst the numerous herd of the Baronet's creditors, that one of them, wiser than the rest, the loss of whose debt would have been his total destruction, posted away to ———. where he arrived just in time to be gratified with the news, that Sir Frederick had that day lost his election by a very great majority; on which agreeable tidings he turned the head of his horse, got into the diligence at the first stage, arrived in London at ten the next morning, and, by the assistance of his solicitor, provided the necessary forms for obtaining personal security on the ex-member, whose return to town he awaited with extreme impatience.

Executions

Executions in great houses, though but lightly treated by the heads, are sometimes considered by the inferior members of a family as very serious disasters: and this second intrusion on the premises of their absent master, conducted with little ceremony and less delicacy, not only frightened the servants, but the nursery babes were so completely terrified, that Ursula, leaving them in the very act of screaming to be comforted by the house-keeper, went with all expedition to Broad-street, where she told her tale of woe with so much feeling, that in less than an hour Mr. Curry released the weeping children from their captivity, and conveyed them to Enfield, with orders for as many of the servants as chose to accept the humane invitation to follow them thither, on being assured they had neither money or credit by which they might exist till the return of Sir Frederick. No wonder, then, that his hospitable villa should be filled with the innocent victims of criminal dissipation.

Mr. Curry, with one of his little *protégées* in each hand, smilingly presented them to his sister and their own, kindly saying—" *These are my friends—give them your hearts' best welcome.*"

Immediately

Immediately they were pressed in the arms of Mrs. St. Edmonds, and their sweet faces covered with the kisses of Clarissa, whose eyes softly beamed the emotions of a soul penetrated by gratitude; but she would not have known the extent of her obligation, if the pretty prattlers, with uplifted hands and animated gestures, had not began a subject which it now behoved the benevolent merchant to finish, taking care to hurt as little as possible the acute sensibility of his beloved ward. But, *maugre* all his tender precaution, rivers of tears bedewed her cheeks during the whole of his recital; and, when concluded, she fell at his feet, covered her face with both hands, and sobbed out—

“ Oh, Sir, we are beggared—we are undone!—even your generous goodness cannot rescue us from the fangs of——”

She could say no more; but, being raised to the arms of Mrs. St. Edmonds, fainted on her bosom.

Ursula, by order of Mr. Curry, had taken the children from the room and conducted them to the garden, where she contrived to divert them till Clarissa's grief had in part yielded

yielded to the soothing voice of friendship.—Again she beheld them—and again her sorrows reviving, they were once more hurried from her sight.

“ Dear, ill-fated creatures !” she cried, wringing her hands, and following them with the tenderest looks of commiseration, “ *I* have been a fine lady, weak, dissipated, extravagant—I deserve to be unhappy !—But what have *you* done, innocent children, that *your* fate should be steeped in bitterness ?”

“ Do you forget,” said Mr. Curry, with particular gravity, not arising from displeasure, but proceeding from sympathy—“ Do you forget that I have just now told you *I* am the self-adopted father of you *all* ?—Never will I mix in the cup of *your* fate or *theirs* the gall of bitterness.”

“ Listen to my brother, dear Clarissa, and be comforted,” cried Mrs. St. Edmonds ; “ respect him as your first, best parent ; and, when my love for you shall have deserved the distinction, honour *me* with the second fond appellation ;—in his *own* words, “ *I* will be the mother of you *all*.”

Clarissa

Clarissa could only kiss the hands of her consoling patrons, and water them with uncontaminated tears of filial piety;—she wept the misery into which her parents' mismanagement had inevitably plunged themselves—these were the drops of excruciating anguish;—she wept, from a variety of sensations, over the tender assurances, that the support to which she herself had so fondly clung should be extended to her sisters—these tears were the distillation of peace, which hope extracted from the very bosom of despair.—She could not, all at once, recover her tranquillity; but, whilst prescribing bounds to her affliction, she set none to her gratitude—it overflowed the confines of silence; her heart became its altar, her tongue could not but act as its priestess.—Nothing was more simple than her professions—nothing more sublime than the truth with which they were uttered.

CHAP. XXVIII.

CONSEQUENCE OF ELECTIONEERING.

“ I Cannot think, my dear,” said Lady Isleworth to Sir Frederick, the morning after he had lost his election, “ what bewitched you to run after this *vile* borough, when a peerage was absolutely staring you in the face.”

“ Before I answer that d—d impertinent question, tell me Madam,” retorted Sir Frederick, “ what officious devil conducted you, *your* imp of a daughter, *your* block-head of a son, *your* infamous rascally friend, that whelp of perdition, Clarence, to mar *my* plans, spend *my* money, and expose *my* understanding ?”

“ I deny

“ I deny the whole *in toto*,” was her ladyship’s laconic vindication.

Sir Frederick sat before a table covered with memento’s of their mutual profusion during the canvass, all of which were brought in for payment previous to his departure. From these papers he only selected one charge, and that in the lump, placed at the foot of a long list of domestic expences incurred by their residence at the hotel.—It ran thus—

“ *Item*, For furnishing four balls
and two concerts - £. 1,400.”

This monstrous article had already been forced upon the optics of Lady Isleworth by her enraged husband.—She had surveyed the demand with her customary *sans froid*, and declared “ she thought it *extremely* reasonable :—the same entertainments in town must have been double the sum, though to a much better purpose, that she was *ready* to allow.”

We have said, that Sir Frederick had a second time seized on this *one* unfortunate paper ; and we verily believe, had it been loaded with lead, he would have hurled it at the head of his puppet : but the only hope he now possessed

fessed suspending from the cobweb support of her independence, tickled his imagination, and produced its usual effects, of transmuting his upbraidings into silence, and his rage into fullness.

A waiter entered, to know his Honour's pleasure, when he would speak to the ladies and gentlemen who filled up the hall, to have their accounts settled.

"Inform them," said the Baronet, "that I am going to town, and will send my steward to settle with them.—Order my carriage; and tell my scoundrels I will blow their brains out, if they are not at the door in ten minutes."

Away went the man, and was immediately followed by his master, in whose ear had been whispered the return to his *own* message.

"Has your Honour any commands for *me*?" submissively asked mine host of the garter.

"None in the world, my good friend—you are an honest fellow—I have a very great respect of your talents, and you may depend on my future favours."

"I hope

“ I hope your Honour finds no fault ? ”

“ Very far from it,” interrupted Lady Isleworth ; “ you have displayed abilities in your entertainments that would not disgrace the most celebrated of *our* confectioners ; and if you will remove to town under *my* patronage, you may soon make your fortune.”

“ Pish ! ” cried Sir Frederick.

“ Your Ladyship’s goodness is greater than my deserts,” returned the landlord, in a voice of studied sorrow ; but I am a poor man, who has provided every thing on his Honour’s credit—my own would not have been taken for a pot of beer.”

“ Well, well,” peevishly exclaimed Sir Frederick, “ let us have no more of your poverty—I shall thank you to go and hasten my servants.”

“ Mine host *said* he would go but stood stock still, with his eyes fixed upon the many slips of paper which contained the precious amount of his most exorbitant demands,

The

The character of these oblique glances was an exordium so perfectly understood by the dissatisfied Baronet, that he repeated his orders with no better success; nor did the authoritative tones in which he announced them serve, as they were intended, to intimidate the silent orator—his fury rose in proportion.

“What the devil do you stand staring at, when you see me in such a hurry to be gone?”

“I was looking at my *little* account, your Honour.”

“Well, Sir, you have seen it before, I suppose!”

“Yes, Sir Frederick, I wrote it with my own hand; and, errors excepted, you will not find yourself more honestly dealt with in the whole town of ———.”

“Zounds, man!” impatiently stamping on the floor, “who disputes your honesty? all I want with you is to send me out of your house.”

“I only

"I only wait, your Honour, to settle the bill."

"I have settled it already with the waiter."

"He did not tell me so," slyly observed the publican.

"Damn'd scoundrel!" vociferated the Baronet.

"I thank your Honour a thousand times," replied the *arch* angler—"he does not mean to cheat me out of the money—but, as you, Sir, have *paid* it into his hands, here is your receipt."

"Put it up—put it up my friend:—I did not absolutely pay him the money; but, what is exactly the same thing, I said I would send my steward to discharge *all* my debts."

"I am sorry your Honour should be *forced* on the trouble of paying them yourself—my neighbours are all in a clamour below stairs—some of them, I know have taken disagreeable steps already—very disagreeable! every
body

body laments your Honour's bad luck, but they say they *must* be paid."

"Nay, my dear," cried her ladyship "why suffer yourself to be *bored* so unmercifully!—pay the creatures, and send them about their business."

More alarmed by the covered threats of his landlord than compliant to the will of his lady, Sir Frederick examined the strength of his pocket-book, which, not being able to hold out against the whole host of besiegers, after much muttering, he compromised the affair, by paying the publican, who on his part promised to be responsible for the patient waiting of all the other creditors, well knowing their bills, though sent in, had not as yet been followed by personal attendance. No wonder, then, that the losing candidate, in passing through the hall to his carriage, should meet with no obstruction from duns of any description; most likely, at that period, they were *adornizing* themselves, to make a respectable figure before the *great* man, or the great man's valet, ascertained that from one or the other of them they should obtain the honour of an audience.

Arthur

Arthur, immersed in his own critical affairs, had no time either to think upon those of his father's, or to acquaint him by letter how much they stood in need of regulation; so that Sir Frederick, on his arrival in town, was in no way prepared for those guests by whom his house was pre-occupied—drones which, one admitted into the hive, whilst any honey remains will not depart from it.

It is absolutely impossible to describe the Baronet's tumultuous execrations, or the *immoveable* placidity of his lady, when, in the dead of night, pinched with cold, starving with hunger, and overcome with fatigue, they found themselves under their sumptuous roof, without fire or candle light nothing to eat or wherewithal to compose their couch, beds and bedding being packed, ready for carriage to a celebrated auction-room in Pall Mall; and Lady Isleworth observed, "that none of the furniture was in its proper place."—This she said with more feeling, than when told her little deserted ones, for whom she condescended to enquire, had been received into the protection of Mr. Curry—"It is mighty well," was her reply—"one place is as good for them as another—They are too young to be fashioned—
—I suppose

—I suppose they will be finely *stuffed*; but I hope they may not grow *coarse* and vulgar.”

Sir Frederick flew from room to room, like one possessed with a legion of evil spirits, kicking down this, knocking down that, and upsetting the other—cursing himself by bell, book, and candle, if he did not set fire to all his houses, and consume his wife in the conflagration—whilst Lady Isleworth was calmly sending two of the five servants who attended them on their woe-begun journey, one to order supper at the nearest hotel, the other to procure chairs for their conveyance thither.

Every thing being ready for emigration, the lord and lady of the mansion forsook that home which their own folly had rendered worse than comfortless; and the rage of Sir Frederick extinguished by its own violence, he wonderfully played his part at the supper-table, covered at a short notice with the most tempting viands.—At five in the morning, sufficiently *rocky* to forget all his mortifications, his ears full of a thousand profitable schemes, devised by his never-desponding help-mate—his eyes fixed in their sockets, and his brain swimming in Burgundy, he rambled to the chamber prepared for his reception, where we
will

will leave him to all the enjoyments that inebriation capable of bestowing.

CHAP. XXIX.

A GREAT MAN IN RETIREMENT.

CLARISSA, whose tender hopes had been so lately blasted by the desertion of her lover, was little able to contend with that domestic affliction which consigned her parents to destruction, and their children to dependence; she smiled only in the presence of her benefactors—in their absence no trace of a smile remained on her faded cheek; nor is that bloom to be coveted by the young, the gay, the beautiful, which, unimpaired, can stand the storm of disappointed affection, and which the tears of filial piety cannot extinguish.

One day, the third after that marked by the return of the most thoughtless couple in the world

world, to a world almost as thoughtless as themselves,—Mr Curry arrived from the city at much earlier hour than usual ; he presented a packet to Clarissa, which, he said, had been left for her at his counting-house, and at his own request, she retired to examine its contents.

Mrs. St Edmonds remarked on the countenance of her brother something which denoted discomposure and vexation : this circumstance was so uncommon that her fears caught the alarm.—

“ You are very ill, or very unhappy !” said she.

“ Not *ill*,” he replied, “ but confess I am *infinitely* distressed.”

“ Good God ! my dear George, you make me tremble—your bounty, like that of Heaven, I know has ever been unlimited—Oh, forbid it, mercy ? that the kindness you have shewn to others should be the means of deranging your own affairs.”

A smile being a swifter messenger than words or motion, the merchant sent out one, winged with conviction, to the relief of her anxiety, before she spoke, or pressed the hand sympathy directed towards him.

“ I thank you, Elizabeth,” said he, “ for your sisterly solicitude—My affairs are in the direction of a good Providence, who manages for his humble agent much better than he could
do

do for himself; and if, instead of daily increasing my opulence, it should have pleased my gracious *Principal* to have plunged me into difficulties, unearned by guilt or imprudence, still, with patient diligence, I might have worked out my own remedy; but, to prop the shattered finances of extravagant folly, is laboriously perplexing, if not absolute labour in vain—the task is arduous, and the success uncertain.”

The re-entrance of Clarissa, and the sudden pause her presence occasioned, explained to Mrs. Edmonds *what* parties were implicated in the latter part of her brother's most sensible remarks—she wished me to proceed, and she could have dispensed with the slightest interruption, even though occasioned by her darling *protégée*.

With a sweet modest supplicating air, Clarissa approached her friends, as they sat together on the same sofa, and said, re-delivering the packet Mr. Curry had just before put into her hands, “Dearest Sir, will you have the goodness to direct what answer I shall make to my poor imprudent sisters—they are married!”

“I am glad of it,” replied the merchant, as he glanced over two sad scowls, ill spelt, and scarcely legible, “the levity of their conduct might

might have been attended with worse consequences.—Say, on my authority, their parents *will* not pardon them, and *cannot* assist them : but, my dear, I would have you add, that I will examine their husbands before they leave town, and, if the young men are good for any thing, they shall not want a friend to forward them in their avocations.”

Delighted with this benevolent message, Clarissa retired, that no time might be lost in conveying it to her sisters ; and Mr. Curry recommenced that information which her entrance had impeded, the substance of which was as follows.

He found a note at his counting-house, without any signature, merely stating, that the day before Sir Frederick Isleworth had been taken into custody, with a direction to the place of his confinement. Not doubting this notice came *from* the Baronet, or was sent by *his* order, though *too* proud or *too* deeply humiliated to openly solicit the assistance he so much stood in need of, he went to seek him, resolved to be governed by circumstances when he should arrive at the spunging-house, where he found the frivolous, couple sitting at a table covered with tea, coffee, chocolate, hot rolls, hard eggs, and all sorts of marmalades—two servants in waiting—an excellent fire, in a handsome first floor, so nicely

furnished, that the generous merchant actually started, and thought somebody must have been playing off a frolick upon his credulity for how could a house of *profusion* be one of *restraint*? He had time to ask himself no other questions, before Sir Frederick, with a stare of surprise, which showed he had no hand in his coming thither, thanked him for his unexpected visit, and intreated he would partake of their refreshment.

Lady Isleworth said she was glad to see him; "but you *citizens*," she added, "are such *early* people, that I suppose you are always prepared to find one *derangée*, and therefore will dispense with apologies?"—"I did, indeed, Madam," replied the merchant, availing himself of the proffered seat, "I did expect to find a *much* greater derangement in your family economy than the scene before me realizes.—I was informed—"—"O yes, I dare say," cried she, suddenly interrupting him, "you have heard it. — Men of condition cannot change their habitation but it runs all over the town like wild-fire."—"Perhaps, then," said Mr. Curry, turning to the Baronet, "you are here by *choice*, not by *compulsion*."—"D—m thy satire," grumbled the Baronet.—"I wish," observed her ladyship, "though I know you *mean* extremely well—I wish you would spare your ill-timed raillery—Sir Frederick *hates* the subject—

ject—and you see how his poor nerves are irritated.—Have you any little whimsical anecdotes to give us from *your* corner of the globe of elopements, robberies, or murders, to divert his melancholy?”

Hurt at her impenetrable folly, though the last man on earth who would have aggravated, by the slightest touch, the tortures of a wounded conscience, he could not help replying, “that in his vicinity elopements seldom happened, because fathers taught industry to their sons, and mothers trained their daughters to virtue—Robberies were more frequent, and the most atrocious committed by parents, who beggared their own children—but murders he knew of none, nor should think acts of cruelty a proper remedy for the cure of melancholy.”——“Curry” cried Sir Frederick, suddenly starting from a stupid reverie, and catching hold of his hand——“Curry, dost thou com hither to insult or to serve me?——“I insult *no* man—I would serve *all* mankind—but *one* motive for my intrusion was, to relieve what I naturally concluded would be your and Lady Mleworth’s anxiety for your absent family, and to assure you of their welfare.

“Pish!” exclaimed the Baronet resuming his vacant chair, and no less vacant ruminations.

“ True,” said her Ladyship ; “ I have so many affairs to settle that the girls escaped my recollection, poor things !—You take care of them, I dare say ; but I hope your sister will not spoil their humours or their shapes, by over-indulgence or over feeding ; and pray tell her it is my request, that she will never let them run about in the air without being covered.”

The merchant snatched up his hat, wished her a very good morning ; and, silently bowing to Sir Frederick, who in vain strove to detain him, walked down stairs, with so much less resentment for her ladyship’s impertinence than feelings of humanity for the fate of her children, that he determined for the sake of the innocent, if possible, to save the guilty. With this noble principle for his guide, he found the way to a dark iron-grated parlour, where he held a long conference with the master of the house, from whom he learned the original debt was eight thousand, which, by detainers, had already amounted to the enormous sum of thirty thousand pounds.—Mr. Curry next enquired of the governor, who happened to be very talkative, “ whether he knew what were the future intentions of his prisoner ?”——“ Nobody better,” said he, exultingly—“ His Honour means to cheat his creditors, and live like a gentleman. His Honour, the ’Squire, was here yesterday, and I could not but hear their conversation, whilst

busied

busied in the two pair of stairs bed-room to secure the windows—My Lady and his Honour wanted the 'Squire to cut off some entailment, but the 'Squire was stubborn: however, he said he would lend them *all* the damage-money, not less than twenty thousand pounds, as soon as he could recover it from a certain Lord, whose name I forget."—The daily papers had teemed with the disgrace of Lady Ann Isleworth and Lord Clarence, to the great amusement of their numerous acquaintance; so that Mr. Curry, having no curiosity to gratify as to *names*, did not interrupt the harangue, which was thus continued—"All the 'Squire's *fair* promises did not content his Honour; and her Ladyship, who tried to make peace between father and son, said, "that her daughter would soon be a Duchess; meantime, by removing to a handsome house within the verge, they might keep up their usual establishment, spend their income, and defy their creditors."

Mr. Curry having consulted his sister on what he had seen and heard at the house of confinement, it was thought expedient to conceal the whole matter from Carissa, till he should have fallen on some plan to make her parents exchange their durance and dreams of splendor for freedom, and the mere necessities of existence—"I shall see them again to-morrow," said the merchant, as he walked into the garden, "but my first call must be upon Bateman."

C H A P. XXX.

THE LAST, AND THE LONGEST.

ELEVEN o'clock in the forenoon was the hour when Mr. Curry knocked at the door of his brother guardian's house; a smart-looking valet answered the summons, who, on being interrogated if Mr. Bateman was at home, shook his head, and replied, mournfully, "that the old gentleman was not to be buried till midnight, and his master saw no company."——"By your master, friend," said the merchant, extremely surprised, "I presume you mean Mr. Percival Bateman, and that the defunct is Mr. Bateman, senior?"——"The same, Sir."——"It is strange I did not hear of his death—pray, was it sudden?"——"Very sudden, Sir.—Five days ago, the poor gentleman was seized with an apoplexy, and died on the spot."——"What, no signs of danger to precede his dissolution?"——"None—Sir he wanted my master to marry one lady when his head was running upon another—so, what does he do, but take out of his strong box all the jewels, as he thought, belonging to my master's late mother, to be new set, against the wedding—Unknown to any body, Wrong-

man

man was sent for to take directions, when, the wrong casket being, by mistake, put into his hand, after examining the contents, he declared the stones were all false — when the owner of them began to spin round and round like a top, then fell to the ground, and never got up again with breath in his mouth, though my master, that moment coming into the house, sent away for physicians enough to cure an hundred men who had life in them, but not skill enough to set one dead man on his legs.”

Shocked at the sudden fate of a long practised extortioner, whose accounts, the better they stood in this world, so much the worse in the world of retribution, Mr. Curry turned from that door which, for the first time in his life, he had ever proposed to have entered, leaving a verbal message with the servant for his master, to say, when his friends were admitted, he should request an audience, on business of importance. — He next directed his steps to the castle of restraint, not to open his intentions before he had consulted with the representative of his late partner in trust for Lady Illeworth, but to enquire of the governor whether any more detainers had been lodged against his prisoner. The person he wanted was gone out; he neither ascended the stairs or sent up a message; a few days would determine what was to be done for Sir Frederick's enlargement; meantime he contented himself with quietly returning to his counting-house, where, taking no

a newspaper, the word *Duel*, in capitals, attracted his notice, and the name of Clarence made him eagerly glance over the following paragraph.—“Yesterday, at seven o'clock in the morning, his Grace the Duke of Bilberrry and Lord Clarence met behind Montagu House, to determine a point of honour, in which the latter was wounded, but it is hoped not mortally.—The unhappy cause of this rencounter remains a mystery to all except the noble parties engaged.”——Our princely merchant, having neither curiosity or clue to develope this mystery, turned to the list of *deaths*, where he saw the decease of his colleague solemnly announced, his parsimony exposed, and his wealth blazoned. But that which is mysterious to others should be no mystery to an author: and on the present occasion it behoves us to declare *what* had taken *two* lounging Peers out of their warm beds at seven o'clock in the morning to fire at each other behind Montagu House.

Lady Ann, having cut with her husband, continued the guest of Madame *Flevetta*, her father not chusing to receive her, till after her second marriage, under his own roof, notwithstanding he pleasantly passed all his evenings with the amiable *trio*, his daughter, her lover, and his own *chere amie*. Her ladyship had now no terms to keep with the Isleworth family, and nothing delighted her so much as setting them up for a

mock

mark to receive the arrows of her wit : amongst other whimsical anecdotes, *that* of the deception played off on their absurdities, by making them believe the Duke of Bilberry was dying for Miss Isleworth, with the patent of Sir Frederick annexed, was so often repeated as at last to reach the ear of his Grace, who, piqued to have his *great* name so grossly sported with, desired an explanation of Lord Clarence.—His Lordship did not deny the charge ; but treated it with so much levity, that a more serious meeting was demanded, and the duel followed.—The Duke, after returning victorious from the field of glory, addressed these few lines to Sir Frederick.—“ Sir, I have done myself justice
 “ on the man who has *insulted* me and
 “ *imposed* on you.—I shall remain on the
 “ Continent till it is known whether the
 “ wounds of Lord Clarence are mortal ; but,
 “ before I leave the kingdom, must have the
 “ honour of exculpating myself from entertain
 “ designs on any part of your family.—Matri-
 “ mony is not at all after my plan, or the very
 “ amiable character of your daughter might
 “ have made me ambitious of your alliance.
 “ I have the honour to be, &c. &c.”——And what effect, asks our impatient reader, did the receipt of this letter produce ?—Great *effects*, but very little *change*, replies the author. Sir Frederick, who always acted *like* a madman, giving

giving way to the rage of disappointment, became mad in REALITY. Lady Isleworth, on the failure of her silly expectations, made but one step from folly to *absolute* idiotism; by which progressive alterations neither themselves or the community were much injured. In this state of non-resistance, Mr. Curry found no difficulties in conducting their affairs for them better than, if in full possession of their senses, they could have done for themselves;—he compromised with their creditors—took them out of confinement—placed them in a retired situation, where he could see, and their children attend them daily—he put them under the care of the faculty—placed confidential domestics about them, and kept them a decent post-chaise for the advantage of exercise. In all these arrangements he was assisted by Percival Bateman, who not only administered to the comfort of the parents, and the interest of the family, but possessed the exclusive power of banishing from the beautiful cheek of his beloved Clarissa that cankering melancholy which had almost devoured the bloom of health, and the stamina of a naturally good constitution.—Percival, the faithful Percival, had never ceased to adore the dear object of his early affections; and, when he thought honour forced him from the worship of his idol, he would not transfer them to another.—Pressed to accept the hand of his fair cousin,

both

both by her father and his own, he appealed to her compassion; she became his confidant; and between them, without the appearance of disobedience, they protracted that union, which would not have afforded *mutual* gratification, even if *one* of the parties had been assenting.—Percival was no stranger to what *he* named the *peculiarities*, but what others deservedly called the *vices* of his father—He knew that the prostitution of truth was not numbered amongst his failings; therefore, when letters from old Bateman, supported by other correspondents, informed him that Miss Isleworth was contracted to Lord Clarence, he most implicitly credited the report. The suit commenced by Arthur against his lordship, opened the eyes of this tender lover, and cleared up his understanding: he eagerly sought that interview which had been solicited by Mr. Curry, before whom the history of his heart was unfolded, and by whom he was afterwards presented to Clarissa—from Clarissa herself received absolution for his *seeming* inconstancy, and in a few weeks became a happy member of the Isleworth family.—Arthur, relieved from the galling chain of a *love-match* by a legal verdict, which also gave him, as a *douceur*, large damages, contracted so great an intimacy with his brother-in-law as soon grew into affection: under the auspices of this new friend he was well received in the
most

most distinguished circles, to which, by time and example, he became no little ornament.

—Lord Clarence recovered from his wound, and, tired of his amour, pleaded conscience for his monitor, retired to his country-seat, and left Lady Ann to her own *discretion*: and the philandering assiduities of a young man in the guards, who, wanting patronage, looked the favour of Lord Benvour as the sure path to promotion, being of opinion that a broken male reputation, unlike the broken rungs of a ladder, is the very safest way by which a soldier of fortune can climb to the *ultimatum* of his profession.—Mr. Curry took on himself to make ample provision for the bold heroes who carried off Arabella and Matilda.—Stella and Diana, in a very few years, were bestowed on two respectable country gentlemen; and not one descendant of the House of Isleworth ever again experienced the complicated evils attendant on *Fashionable Involvements*.

F I N I S.



